MANUAL
of
REFORMED DOCTRINE

BY

PROF. W. HEYNS

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

MANUAL

— OF —

REFORMED DOCTRINE

— By —

PROF. W. HEYNS

Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, Eph. 6:14a.

As new born babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation, 1 Pet. 2:2.

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
"The Reformed Press"
208 Pearl Street Grand Rapids, Mich.

LIBRARY
CENTRAL BAPTIST SEMINARY
KANSAS CITY 2, KANSAS

Copyrighted, 1926
WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

230.57
H619

Foreword

As my work on Reformed Doctrine in the Holland language has been favorably received, far more than I had hoped, it gives me much pleasure that now the volume is also to be published in the language of our blessed land.

For the translation I am indebted to several brethren, who helped me some years ago in preparing an English version to be used in my work at Calvin College for those who needed it. And for reviewing the copy and making it ready for the press I am indebted to Rev. K. Bergsma, who willingly consented to do this work, has interested himself for it, and has accomplished the task with assiduity and carefulness.

I wish to express my hearty appreciation and thankfulness to these brethren for their kind assistance.

May the blessing of the Lord rest upon these labors, and may this edition serve to the glory of God in the perfection of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ.

W. HEYNS.

44111

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Page

1. Reformed Doctrine 7
2. Religion and Religions 7
3. Knowledge of God from Nature 9
4. The Holy Scriptures 13
5. The Doctrinal Standards 21

Division of the Doctrine of Faith 24

I. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

1. The Names of God 25
2. The Attributes of God 26
3. The Essence of God. The Trinity 35
4. The Works of God 41
   a. The Decrees.
      1) The Decrees in General 41
      2) Predestination 43
      3) The Covenant of Redemption 53
   b. Creation 54
   c. Providence 60

II. THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

1. Man in the State of Integrity 63
2. The Covenant of Works 67
3. Man's Probation and Fall 72
4. Sin 76
5. The Punishment of Sin 79
6. Misery of Man 82

III. THE DOCTRINE OF THE MEDIATOR

Introduction 84

1. The Person of the Mediator 90
2. The Names of the Mediator 95
3. The Offices of the Mediator 99
   His Prophetic Office 100
   His Priestly Office 101
   His Kingly Office 106
4. The States of the Mediator 109
   The State of Humiliation 110
   The State of Exaltation 115

IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE

		Page
	Introduction	121
1.	The Covenant of Grace	123
2.	The Church	147
	The Church.	
	Church Membership.	
	The Church Offices.	
	The Church Assemblies.	
	Church Discipline.	
	Public Worship.	
	The Church and the World.	
3.	The Means of Grace	188
	a. The Word of God	193
	The Law as a Means of Grace.	
	The Gospel as a Means of Grace.	
	b. The Sacraments	201
	Holy Baptism	205
	Infant Baptism.	
	The Lord's Supper	218

V. THE DOCTRINE OF THE APPLICATION OF GRACE

	Introduction	235
1.	Calling	242
2.	Regeneration	245
3.	Conversion	257
4.	Faith	262
	Faith.	
	The Assurance of Faith.	
5.	Justification	285
6.	Sanctification	292
	The Ten Commandments	300
	The Lord's Prayer	315

VI. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD

1.	The State of the Soul after Death	330
2.	The Second Coming of Christ	333
3.	Resurrection and Judgment	339
4.	Eternal Life and Eternal Death	343

INTRODUCTION

1. Reformed Doctrine

1. **What is meant by Reformed Doctrine.**—By a Doctrine of Faith is meant a compendium of the truths concerning salvation which are revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, and which we have to know and to believe as participants of the Covenant of Grace, since this knowledge is indispensible in order to walk in the way of the Covenant and to inherit its benefits. Such a Doctrine of Faith is Reformed if these truths of salvation are presented according to the interpretation given them in the Reformed Confessional Standards or Forms of Unity (Cf. § 39ff).

2. **Its Scope and Purpose.**—A Doctrine of Faith does not mean to be a condensed work on Dogmatics. Its task is more practical, having for its aim to impart concerning the truths of salvation, both the dogmatical and the ethical truths, such a knowledge as is necessary for the participant of the Covenant of Grace to arrive at maturity, i. e. at the perfection of those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil", Heb. 5:14. This purpose it must ever bear in mind, as it is this purpose that must decide the choice of material and the extent of treatment. In how far, for instance, dissenting views either within or without our circles must be taken into consideration, must depend from their practical import in order to enable "each man to be fully assured in his own mind", Rom. 14:5. Thus it must strive to educate the participants of the Covenant of Grace, that they may become mature believers, who know how they "ought to walk and to please God, that they abound more and more", 1 Thess. 4:1, and who are "men of God, furnished completely unto every good work", 2 Tim. 3:17, in the social and civil and especially in the religious spheres of life.

2. Religion and Religions

3. **What is meant by true Religion.**—The highest aim of man is to serve God, for to that end man was created by God, who wrought all things for His own sake. Still more are we under obligation to serve God when by His grace we have been saved from eternal damnation and have been made heirs of the glorious redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

True service of God or true religion is described as consisting in knowing, loving, enjoying, and glorifying Him. This, however, is rather an enumeration of the elements belonging to true religion, than a description of true religion itself. Of true religion, to know God is the condition, to love Him is the source, to enjoy Him is the blessing for the worshipper personally, and to glorify Him is the purpose.

Another description of true religion, which we would prefer, is this: to dedicate ourselves to God with all that we are and all that we have. Thus in Rom. 12:1 it is said that "to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" is our "reasonable service." This implies that love to God is the source of true religion, for to dedicate oneself, the reverse of seeking oneself, of egotism, is peculiar to love, 1 Cor. 13:5, is love in action. Unless it has love for its source, dedication has no value. Even to bestow all our goods to feed the poor, or to give our body to be burned, without having love, profits us nothing, 1 Cor. 13:3. Our life and our deeds are truly religious in proportion as they are actuated by love to God.

To say it very briefly, true religion is to serve God. This implies a) that the object of our service is the only true God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word; b) that the manner of our service is not that of a "will-worship," Col. 2:23, which cannot please Him, but that which He Himself has prescribed in His Word; to serve Him is to keep His Word, to do His will, Matt. 15:9; 7:21; John 14:23; c) that the purpose of our service is actually to serve Him. To be an act of true religion, our going to the house of prayer, for instance, must have for its purpose not primarily self-edification, but to serve God in communion with His people.

1 Cor. 13:5, Love .... seeketh not its own.

Matt. 15:9, But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

Matt. 7:21, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

John 14:23, Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

4. **False Religions.**—Over against the true religion there are false religions, rightly called false, because: a) the object of their worship is not the true God, but idols of their own invention; b) their manner of worship is arbitrary, also of their own invention; c) their aim in worshipping is not to serve their gods but to serve themselves, to further their own interests by trying to prevail upon these gods to grant them favors.

5. **Principal Groups of False Religions.**—The principal groups

of false religions are those of the Heathen, the Mohammedans, and the Jews.

Heathen are those who worship many gods (Polytheism), which they have made for themselves according to their own imagination, by personifying virtues and vices, objects in nature and powers of nature, ancestors, heroes, etc.

Mohammedans are the followers of Mohammed, who appeared in Arabia in the beginning of the seventh century and professed to be the highest prophet of God, higher than Moses, higher even than Christ. The Mohammedans worship one God (Monotheism), but not the triune God. Their religious belief is a mingling of Heathen, Jewish, and Christian elements, and the chief precept is: "There is but one God and Mohammed is his prophet."

The Jews are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose religion was the true one under the Old Testament dispensation, but it is now a false religion because of their rejection of Christ and the New Testament.

5. **Christian Churches.**—Christianity is divided into three principal divisions: the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Church, the Protestant Churches.

The principal groups of the Protestant Churches are the Lutherans and the Reformed. Under the last named division come the Reformed, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalian, the Congregational, the Baptist, and the Methodist Churches. The Reformed and the Presbyterian Churches have the same doctrine and church government, but the others differ in these respects. In doctrine the Episcopalians and Congregationalists do not materially differ from the Reformed, but the Baptists reject infant Baptism and the Wesleyan Methodists are confessedly Arminian. And in church government the Episcopalians and most Methodists have accepted the hierarchical, and the Congregationalists and Baptists the independent system (Cf. §413).

The Lutherans distinguish themselves from the Reformed mainly in their system of church government (Cf. §281), the principal point of difference in doctrine being originally only their view of the Lord's Supper (Cf. §346, 2).

3. The Knowledge of God from Nature

7. **Religion and Knowledge of God.**—Religion presupposes knowledge of God and is impossible without such knowledge. No one would think of serving God if he did not know that there was a God. And no one can serve God adequately without knowing who God is and what is pleasing to Him.

8. **Wherefrom God can be known.**—God, who in His infinite majesty is infinitely exalted above all creation, and who "dwells in light unapproachable," 1 Tim. 6:16, can be known only when and in so far as He reveals Himself to us. Such a revelation, however, is not wanting. It has pleased God to reveal Himself to us that we should know Him, even to reveal Himself to us in a twofold manner, viz. in nature and in the Holy Scriptures. The first is called His general, the second His special revelation.

9. **These Two Revelations Harmonious.**—From the fact that both nature and Scripture are revelations of God it follows that these cannot conflict with one another. The teachings of nature cannot conflict with the teachings of Scripture, and the teachings of Scripture cannot conflict with the teachings of nature. Still this seems often to be the case. Not rarely do we find Natural Science teaching things that we consider to be in conflict with Scripture. In such cases the fault lies with human interpretation of either that which nature teaches or that which the Scriptures teach. The one or the other must then be erroneous. Misinterpretation of Scripture is possible, but misinterpretation of nature no less so. And since Natural Science is a) not nature itself; b) as a rule hostile to the Holy Scriptures; and c) has so often had to correct itself with respect to things which with much ado it had announced as the established results of its investigations, there is every reason for us to go slow in adopting its opinions.

10. **The Knowledge of God from Nature Twofold.**—The knowledge of God from nature is twofold; innate and acquired knowledge.

11. **Innate Knowledge of God.**—The innate knowledge is a small remnant of the image of God, particularly of the knowledge of God that belonged to that image, fruit of common grace, therefore, by which the thorough permeation of sin was checked. It consists in the impression present in the soul of man that there is a Divine Being upon whom he is dependent and to whom he is responsible. The reality of this inborn impression in man is evident from Scripture, Rom. 1:19, and from the fact that no people, no matter how barbarous or degenerate, has been found that has not some form of religion. The fact that there are Atheists does not prove the contrary. One may refuse to listen to the voice speaking in the depths of one's soul, but that does not prove that that voice is not there. It has been truly said that Atheism is more the wish that there be no God, than an actual belief that there is no God.

Rom. 1:19, Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God has manifested it unto them.

12. **Acquired Knowledge of God.**—The acquired knowledge of God from nature is that which can be gained through viewing nature and its phenomena and reflecting upon the same.

13. **Possibility of this Acquired Knowledge.**—To acquire knowledge concerning God from nature is possible because nature is especially intended to be a revelation of God. A work is ever a revelation. Whatever a man may do, his work will show in some measure what manner of man he is. All the more is this true of God's works in nature, as these works were made by Him with the definite purpose to reveal Himself in them. Thus all nature "is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity, as the Apostle Paul saith, Rom. 1:20" (Confession of Faith, Art. 2).

With a book, however, must go the ability to read it. The extent to which man in the state of integrity had the ability to read the book of nature appears from Adam's naming the animals. If man had not fallen all nature would have been for him an ineffably rich source of knowledge of God, a source so complete that he would have had no need of a special revelation. And, although through sin man's reason has become so darkened, that he has no longer the ability to apprehend God's relevation in nature fully, yet by the grace of God he has small remnants of it remaining, so that still "the invisible things of God are clearly seen by men, even His everlasting power and divinity, that they may be without excuse," Rom. 1:20.

> Rom. 1:20, For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity, that they may be without excuse.

14. **Superiority of the Acquired Knowledge.**—Innate knowledge of God, being inborn in every person and therefore peculiar to him by nature, is present in every human being. Acquired knowledge, on the contrary, must be gained by investigation and reflection, so that some will have more of it than others. Heathen like Socrates, Plato, Seneca, and Cicero had acquired this knowledge to a remarkable degree, but the great multitude has little of it. If acquired, however, this knowledge has the advantage of giving clearer conceptions than the innate knowledge. While the latter consists only in an indistinct impression of the existence of God as Creator and Sovereign, the former not only gives greater clearness to that impression, thus deepening the conviction that God exists, but also brings with it some knowledge concerning the divine nature.

15. **Contents of the Acquired Knowledge.**—From nature knowledge of God is to be acquired, as we said, concerning both the existence and the nature of God.

The existence of God is very evidently revealed by nature since it manifests itself as a product, i. e. as something that could not have been brought itself into existence, but must be brought into existence by One greater than nature. Thus nature proclaims to us, that there is a Being that has brought it into existence, that there is a God. This is called the cosmological argument. Other arguments of a similar nature are the teleological, the ontological, etc.

And knowledge concerning the divine nature is to be obtained from nature for the reason that it clearly reveals some of the divine attributes, viz. God's omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness. Nature proclaims the omnipotence of God through its immeasurable greatness, its inexhaustible fullness, and through the fact that all this must have been brought into existence from nothing. It proclaims the wisdom of God through the wonderful composition and fitness of its creatures. And nature proclaims the goodness of God through the wealth of gifts especially to man, "filling our hearts with food and gladness," Acts 14:17. Also "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men," Rom. 1:18.

16. **The Knowledge of God from Nature and Unbelief.**—No matter how obvious or convincing this testimony of nature may be, it is impossible to bring an unbeliever to admit the existence of God through arguments from nature and reason. Not because these arguments are not convincing, but because by sin his reason is darkened and his heart perverse, unwilling to believe, and loving the darkness rather than the light, John 3:19. Arguments from nature and reason cannot change the heart, so that the sinner believes.

For to be convinced of the existence of God is a matter not of reason but of faith. Not reason but faith is "the assurance, the evidence, of things not seen," Hebr. 11:1. The Scriptures speak of "believing that God is," Hebr. 11:6.

17. **The Significance of the Knowledge of God from Nature.** The knowledge of God from nature is of special significance for those who are not blessed with the light of the Scriptures, since it is the only light that shines in their darkness, and since they will be held responsible for not having followed that light. They will on that account be "without excuse," Rom. 1:20. Much more will it make inexcusable the unbelief of atheists and atheistic evolutionists, who know but reject the Scriptures and even refuse to see in nature a revelation of God as its Creator.

But also for us, who believe and honor the Scriptures as the revelation that is able to make us wise unto salvation, the knowl-

edge of God from nature is of considerable importance. In addition to the fact that it can render service in confirming and strengthening our faith in the existence of God, it can foster a spirit of humiliation, Ps. 8:3, 4, a feeling of wonder, Ps. 104, a spirit of praise, Ps. 8:9, because of His glory as displayed in His works. Often we make but too little effort to read in that "most elegant book" of nature to "contemplate the invisible things of God" (Confession, Art. 2). Still nature can not reveal us the way to salvation. It does not teach us to know God as He must be known to be saved, i. e. as the Triune God. Nor does it teach us concerning Christ and the salvation which He has wrought, nor the way in which we can become partakers in that salvation. All this indispensible knowledge can only be derived from the Holy Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:15; Luke 16: 29, 31.

Ps. 8:3, 4, 9, When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? . . . . . O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth.

2 Tim. 3:15, And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Luke 16: 29, 31, But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them . . . . And He said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.

4. The Holy Scriptures

18. **The Holy Scriptures a Special Revelation of God.**—In the Holy Scriptures God has given us a special revelation, a fruit of special grace and a special deed of that grace; a revelation which would not have been necessary but for sin. It is a revelation of grace, having as its purpose to reveal to fallen man the counsel of God for his redemption.

19. **The Bible the Word of God.**—The Holy Scripture, or the Bible, is the Word of God, because it has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all the books of the Bible, the primary Author; the holy men which He used for that purpose were but secondary authors.

20. **Not: "The Word of God is in the Bible."**—By stating: "the Bible is the Word of God," we take our position over against those who consider only those parts of the Bible to be the Word of God, which they on their own authority decide to be worthy of being so regarded, and who therefore prefer to say: "the Word of God is in the Bible." The fact that there occur in the Scriptures passages spoken by erring persons, evil doers, even devils, might lead

us to suppose that this expression is indeed commendable. Still, this would mean nothing less than a denial of the insipration of Scriptures, and consequently would deprive us of our Bible. For in that case it would be altogether uncertain what parts of the Bible were to be accepted as the Word of God and what parts not. We would have to accept a man-made sorting, and in the place of divine authority we would have to be contented with the poor substitute of human authority as the ground of faith. Concerning the objection that the Bible contains false statements of erring persons, it may be observed that every author calls a book that he has written his book, and that with full right, regardless of the number of times he may therein have quoted to others. So also is the whole Bible the Word of God, since all that is written therein was written by divine inspiration.

21. **What is meant by Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures.**—By the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures in general is meant: the influencing activity of the Holy Spirit on the minds of the writers, whereby they were made mindful of that which is the meaning of the Spirit they should write as well with respect to the words as to the subject matter.

22. **Threefold Action of the Inspiration.**—In the inspiration of the Scriptures there was a threefold action on the part of the Holy Spirit: a) impulse, whereby the authors were induced to write, for even the fact that they have written was through the Holy Spirit; b) illumination, whereby they were given clearness and certainty concerning their subject matter; c) direction, whereby they were guarded from all possibility of error.

23. **The Inspiration Plenary, or Verbal.**—The inspiration was not only an inspiration in regard to the subject matter, but also in regard to the choice of words. For: a) an inspiration as to thought without an inspiration as to words is simply impossible, because, as the subject matter is expressed by means of words, the exact expression of the subject matter depends on the correct choice of words; b) the entire Scripture would be untrustworthy without verbal inspiration. We can determine the sense of an expression only according to the meaning of the words, and if there is no certainty that the right words are used, there can be no certainty that what they express is what is really meant, no certainty that the sentence is the exact expression of the meaning of the Spirit; c) when appealing to the Scriptures Christ in John 10:35 and Paul in Gal. 3:16 advanced proofs which were derived from a single word or even the form of a word used in the Old Testament. We must, therefore, hold fast to the theory of verbal

inspiration, even though the theory of partial inspiration, i. e. inspiration as to the subject matter only, seems at times very convenient in the way of disposing of exegetical difficulties.

John 10:35, If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Gal. 3:16, Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

24. **The Inspiration not Mechanical.**—Although the inspiration was verbal, it is not to be regarded as mechanical, i. e. as if the holy writers were but passive instruments of the Spirit, as a pen is in the hands of the writer. The inspiration was organic; it was an inspiration that did not preclude the fact that the holy authors wrote as if from their own spirit and according to their own peculiar gifts, just as we do when we write. This accounts for the difference in language and style and manner of presentation, which may be noticed in the books of different writers; something that would otherwise be impossible. Such an inspiration we cannot comprehend; we can but wonder at it.

25. **Difference of Inspiration according to the Needs of the Writers.**—As far as illumination and direction are concerned, these must needs have varied somewhat according to the differences in the nature of the books to be written. In the case of historical books, what the authors needed was especially a correct knowledge of history, and ability to see the hand of God in that history, as the events had to be described not from a human, but from the divine standpoint; in the case of doctrinal books a clear insight into the truths of salvation was the chief requisite; and in the case of prophetical books a direct revelation was needed.

26. **Significance of the Inspiration for the Contents of the Bible.**—In virtue of its inspiration the Scripture is the infallible Word of God, all of its contents having been written under the guidance of the Spirit. The whole of its contents, with the exception only of sayings that are recorded as sayings of uninspired persons (f. i. John 9:31; Acts 5:35-39), is of normative authority for our faith and conduct. For sayings of uninspired persons the inspiration only guarantees that they are correctly reported, that they are historically true.

27. **Proofs for the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.**—For the inspiration of the Old Testament we need no more proof than what is said in 2 Tim. 3:16: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

This statement, however, refers only to the Old Testament, as at that time the New Testament as a whole had not yet come into existence.

For the inspiration of the New Testament we have proof in the following facts: a) that such guidance was promised to those through whom the New Testament Church was to be established, John 16:13; b) that this promise was fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2: c) that from 1 Cor. 14:37 it appears that the sacred writers were conscious of this guidance, and of their authority to require the acceptance of the things that they wrote as the commandment of the Lord.

2 Tim. 3:16, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

John 16:13, Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come.

Acts 2:4, And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

1 Cor. 14:37, If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandments of the Lord.

28. **Rational Arguments for Inspiration.**—In addition to Scriptural proofs rational arguments have been advanced to establish inspiration also on rational grounds. Such arguments are:

1. The fact that in the Scriptures hidden things are revealed, such as the Trinity, the plan of salvation, the creation, etc.; things which are known only to God and which the Scriptures could not reveal if it were not a divine book. Revelations of hidden things are also the prophecies. The future is known to God alone. Yet the Bible is filled with prophecies, and many striking fulfillments of these prophecies can be pointed out in history. Such a book cannot be otherwise than a divine book.

2. The fact that all the teachings of Scripture, its doctrinal as well as its ethical teachings, and the way of salvation it presents, are of such sublimity, so conformable to the dignity of God, so tending to magnify His glory, that these teachings cannot be otherwise than divine in origin. Man's natural disposition has always shown itself averse to such teachings; they must, therefore, come from another than from a human source.

3. The fact that all the Scriptures form an organic whole from Genesis to Revelations, notwithstanding their having been written during a lapse of time of more than fifteen centuries, and by more than thirty men, men who greatly differed in talents, rank, and culture at that. The organic unity of the books of the Bible shows conclusively that the holy writers during all these ages have

labored under one and the same divine guidance and according to one and the same divine plan, viz. under the guidance and according to the plan of the Holy Spirit, who is the primary Author of the entire Scriptures.

29. **Significance of these Rational Arguments.**—The rational arguments cited above are clear and convincing, but only to him who believes; not to the natural man who does not understand the things of the Spirit, and therefore lacks the ability to value these arguments. He has his doubts and contradictions and clings to them. The first argument, for instance, has no significance for a person who does not believe in the Trinity, in creation, in the plan of salvation, and who regards the prophecies as having been written after the events concerning which they prophecy had happened. There are no proofs that can make an end to the contradictions of unbelief.

And even for a believer these arguments have but secondary value. The conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, as well as the conviction that God exists, must be a matter of faith, and faith is not a matter of reason. When God in condescending grace comes to us with His Word, He has the most absolute right to demand that we shall believe it, and He actually demands that we shall believe it for no other reason than because that Word is His Word. His divine honor and majesty do not permit that we should have the right to make the acceptance of His Word dependent on our being rationally convinced of its truth. Neither would such a faith be faith. His way, therefore, is not to give rational certainty first and to demand faith after that, but to require faith, implicit faith, in Scripture, because it is His Word. And to Him who thus believes He will give certainty, even rational certainty in the way of faith (Cf §412). "If ye will not believe," Scripture says, "surely ye shall not be established," Is. 7:9, and on another place it is stated that the grace of being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise is not given until "after that ye have believed," Eph. 1:13. He who accepts the Scripture as the Word of God in faith, without rational proofs for doing so, shall thereafter through the testimony of the Spirit and the personal experience of its veracity, receive personal certainty that the Word of God is the truth, John 7:17. But he who will not accept the Word of God in faith, will never become truly convinced of its truth, and for him Scripture will remain a sealed book. The above mentioned rational arguments also can only become of some value for us after we have believed.

John 7:17, If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.

30. **The Properties of the Holy Scriptures.**—The properties which are peculiar to the Scripture in virtue of divine inspiration are especially: a) Divine authority; b) Infallibility; c) Sufficiency; d) Clearness in all that is necessary to know for salvation.

31. **Inestimable Value of the Scriptures.**—The Holy Scripture is given us to make us wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. 3:15, to be a rule for our faith and for our life, Luke 11:28; Is. 8:20; to be a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path, Ps. 119:105; to serve us as the sword of the Spirit in the good fight of the faith, Eph. 6:17; to be a food for the soul that we may grow thereby, 1 Pet. 2:2; to be for us a fountain of comfort and hope in the trials and sorrows of life. Thus the Holy Scripture may well be precious unto us, "above gold, yea, above fine gold," Ps. 119:127.

32. **Not the Word alone Sufficient for these Purposes.**—For these purposes the Scriptures would be sufficient unto us, were it not for the fact that through sin our mind has become darkened and our will perverted. Now, however, in connection with the Scriptures the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. For now it is only through the illuminating action of the Spirit on our understanding that we are enabled to comprehend the Scriptures aright, and only through His sanctifying action on our will that we become willing and desirous to act according to the Scriptures. This teaching and guidance are promised to the believers, John 14:16, and are enjoyed by them, 1 John 2:20; Romans 8:14.

John 14:16, And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may remain with you for ever.

1 John 2:20, And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Rom. 8:14, For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.

33. **The Activity of the Holy Spirit and Scripture.**—This teaching and guiding of the Spirit is always bound to the Scriptures, as it has for its purpose to make us understand the Scriptures and live according to them. Moreover, if it were a teaching outside of or above the Scriptures, then this activity of the Spirit would be dishonoring to the Word of God, which He Himself has inspired, because it would be an activity that treated the Bible as defective and insufficient, not containing all that we need for our sanctification and salvation. Now, however, since His activity is bound to it, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Word by maintaining its perfection and sufficiency, and by teaching us that we may know it more and more in its wealth and fullness, John 16:14.

John 16:14, He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you.

34. **Mistaken Notion of False Mysticism.**—The notion that this teaching of the Spirit is a teaching independent of the Word, that believers receive instructions and revelations of the Holy Spirit not contained in the Scriptures, is called false Mysticism. By these people Scripture is held in little esteem. In direct opposition to statements as Hebr. 4:12 they call the Word of God "a dead letter," "a letter that killeth," over against the Spirit who gives life (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:6). High above Scripture they place the so-called "inner light," by which they mean these imaginary instructions of the Holy Spirit. Thus unhesitatingly they regard things that arise in their thoughts and feelings, as long as they have but a certain appearance of spirituality, as belonging to that "inner light," not only without testing them in the light of Scripture, but even though they know them to be contrary to the latter.

For this reason it is called false Mysticism, in contradistinction to true Mysticism. There certainly is a true Mysticism, as there are true workings of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, Matt. 10:19, 20, Rom. 8:26, and consequently a true belief therein. But this true Mysticism recognizes that these inner workings of the Spirit are never independent of or contrary to the Word of God, and that there are also inner workings—not seldom very plausible workings, 2 Cor. 11:14—of Satan and of our own deceitful heart. It does not accept, therefore, as work of the Spirit that which is contrary to Scripture, and realizes that all inner experiences must be submitted to the test of the Word of God, as given us to be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path," in order to discern the true from the false.

> Hebr. 4:12, For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.
>
> Matt. 10:19, 20, But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.
>
> Rom. 8:26, And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

35. **The Danger of False Mysticism.**—This false mysticism is extremely dangerous. We have an erring understanding and a deceitful heart, Jer. 17:9, an understanding and a heart which are prone to regard that as good which is really evil. Furthermore Satan is seeking by all manner of means, even fashioning himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11:14, to deceive us. In view of all this deception it is a great privilege that the Lord has given us His Word as "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path."

So long as we hold fast to that Word, testing everything in the light of it, and rejecting all that is in opposition to it, no matter how spiritual it may seem, so long we are safe, Ps. 119:165. But if we desert this infallible guide to follow such a pretended "inner light," we are in danger of falling into all manner of snares of Satan and of being drawn into all sorts of wrong ways. All kinds of false conceptions, the committing of revolting sins, even hideous crimes have been the evil fruits of this evil tree. Not to speak of the terrible danger of deceiving themselves for eternity, by building their hope of salvation on what they consider rock, to find in the end that it was only sand, Matt. 7:22.

2 Cor. 11:14, And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light.

Ps. 119:165, Great peace have they that love thy law, and they have no occasion for stumbling.

Matt. 7:22, Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

36. **The Terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament."**—The two divisions of the Holy Scriptures are called "Old Testament" and "New Testament," because the books contained in them are the books of the Covenant or Testament of Grace. The Covenant of Grace is called a "testament," Hebr. 9:15, because of the similarity between that Covenant and a testament or last will. Just as the last will of a testator is expressed and made known in a written document, which is also called a testament, so the Lord has given us a written document of the Covenant or Testament of Grace; and that document is the Holy Scriptures. In the Holy Scriptures, as in a testament, we are informed: what the inheritance is, how it can be acquired, who have been made heirs (the partakers of the Covenant) to whom the inheritance is granted (Cf. §246), and what is the way to inherit it (Cf. §239). To those who will not walk in this way it is announced in this testament, that they will not enter into the inheritance, Hebr. 3:18, 19.

37. **The Holy Scripture as a Book.**—The Old Testament is written by prophets, and the New Testament by Evangelists and Apostles; the Old Testament in Hebrew with the exception of some small portions of Ezra and Daniel and of Jer. 10:11, that are written in Chaldean, and the New Testament is written in Greek. The Old Testament consists of 39, and the New Testament of 27 books, making a total of 66. The division into chapters and verses was made at a later date by noninspired persons, and is not always correct. These 39 and 27 Books are divided in the following groups:

Those of the Old Testament into:
Historical Books (Genesis—Esther),
Poetical Books (Job—Song of Solomon, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah),
Prophetical Books (Isaiah—Malachi; 4 "major" and 12 "minor" prophets).
Those of the New Testament into:
Historical Books (Matthew—Acts),
Doctrinal Books (The Epistles of Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude),
Prophetical Book (The Revelation of John).

5. The Doctrinal Standards

38. **The Doctrine of Faith and the Doctrinal Standards.**—The Doctrine of Faith is drawn from Scripture, the sole source of saving truth. This does not mean, however, that we would have to consider it our task to derive the Doctrine of Faith from Scripture, for the Church has done that ages ago, especially in the time of the Reformation, and what she found to be the Doctrine of Faith revealed and taught in the Scriptures, she has expressed in Doctrinal (or Confessional) Standards. A Doctrine of Faith such as this, therefore, has for its task only to present what is given in the Standards which were accepted by our Reformed Churches as their "Forms of Unity." It may treat the truths contained therein in its own manner, in a more systematic way, it may elaborate on them, take also in consideration truths related to them, add explanations and proofs from Scripture, but it may never deviate from them. Otherwise it would not have the right to call itself a Reformed Doctrine of Faith.

39. **Significance of the Doctrinal Standards.**—In its Doctrinal Standards the Church has given expression to its conception of the truths of salvation, as opposed to the conception of others. These Standards are like a banner around which all the Reformed gather and upon which that one faith which unites them all is written. It is for this reason that they are called "Forms of Unity." They must be signed by all officers of the Church, and no one who disagrees with them on vital points can be a member of this Church. For the question whether a point of doctrine is true, we seek the answer only in the Scriptures; but for the question whether a point of doctrine is Reformed, we must seek the answer in our Confessional Standards. The writings of Reformed Theologians and authors have in this respect only secondary value.

40. **Our Doctrinal Standards.**—Our Doctrinal Standards are: the Confession of Faith, called the Confessio Belgica; the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, or the Five Articles against the Arminians.

41. **The Confession of Faith.**—The Confession of Faith was composed in 1559 by Guido de Bres, a Flemish minister, who died the death of a martyr in 1567. This Confession was intended, in view of the calumnies of the enemies, to be an open testimony of what the Reformed Churches really believed, and was presented to Philip II who persecuted them so cruelly. Already in 1571 the first Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands adopted it as a Doctrinal Standard.

42. **The Heidelberg Catechism.**—The Heidelberg Catechism received that name because it originated in Heidelberg, a city in southern Germany. It was composed by Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, who were commissioned by the pious Count of the Palatinate, Frederick the Wise, to provide for a manual for catechetical instruction, and in the beginning of the year 1563 it made its first appearance. A few years later (1566) Peter Dathenus, also a Flemish minister, published a rhymed version of the Psalms in behalf of public worship of the Churches of the Netherlands, with the addition of three liturgical Forms and a few prayers, and also of a translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, so that the latter soon became known to these Churches. From the beginning it was valued highly, and by the following Synods it was adopted to serve for the instruction of the youth, and as a Doctrinal Standard.

43. **The Canons of Dordrecht.**—The Canons of Dordrecht or Dort were composed and accepted as a Doctrinal Standard by the Synod of Dort 1618, '19 with a view to the Arminian heresy. In five chapters the five points of difference are treated and in each case the Reformed Doctrine regarding these points is presented and then the Arminian heresy is pointed out and rejected. These five chapters are: I. Election; II. Redemption through Christ; III and IV. The Depravity of Man and the Conversion to God; V. The Perseverance of the Saints.

44. **Compendium of the Christian Religion.**—Besides these three Doctrinal Standards mention must be made of the "Compendium of the Christian Religion," which we find also in our Psalters next to the Standards. This Compendium is an extract of the Catechism, composed by Hermannus Faukelius, a minister in Middelburg. The Consistory of the Church at Middelburg desired such an extract so that it might serve as a guide for the instruction of those who were to make confession of their faith. The Synod of Dort 1618, '19 recommended it for the catechetical instruction of the middle classes for whom the Heidelberg Catechism was too difficult, and as such a guide for catechetical instruc-

tion, and for examining those who desire to make their confession of faith it is still used.

45. **The Ecumenical Creeds.**—In addition to the Doctrinal Standards mentioned above there are still three ecclesiastical documents which are very old and are called "Ecumenical" (general) Creeds, because they are to a certain extent acknowledged by the entire Christian Church. These are:

1. **The Apostolic Creed,** which already in the first centuries of the Church gradually originated from the baptismal formula according to Matt. 28:19, which requires a confession of belief in the Triune God. The twelve articles of this Creed are treated in the Catechism as a synopsis of what is necessary for a Christian to believe.
2. **The Nicene Creed,** which originated in the fourth century, and which, as we have it, is more properly called the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed. It is a Confession concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, over against the Arian heresy.
3. **The Athanasian Creed,** which as well as the Nicene Creed originated in the conflict with the Arians (Cf. §87), but which is erroneously ascribed to Athanasius, who was one of the foremost defenders of the orthodox faith.

46. **The Liturgical Forms.**—Besides the Forms of Unity mentioned in §40, there are also Liturgical Forms. Some of these are ritual prayers, others are intended for use in the administration of the Sacraments, ordination of Church officers, administration of Church discipline, and confirmation of marriage. The provision of these Forms shows that the Church from the time of the Reformation has deemed it necessary that the manner of administration of these ceremonies and the words to be spoken on such occasions were determined by the Church, instead of being left to the discretion of individuals. The Church Order demands the use of these Forms for the above mentioned ceremonies, so that every minister is under obligation to comply with that demand, and to refrain from making arbitrary changes.

These Forms are not intended to serve as Doctrinal Standards, but still they are of a doctrinal nature, especially in regard to the ceremonies for the administration of which they are destined. And since they were sanctioned and prescribed by the same Synods which gave us our Doctrinal Standards, they bear the character of ecclesiastical writings in which the Church gives expression to her faith. Departure from that which they teach is therefore departure from the Reformed faith, as well as departure from that which is taught in the Forms of Unity. The same is true of the Compendium.

DIVISION OF THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH

47. The Catechism divides the doctrine of salvation into three parts: I. Man's Misery; II. His Redemption; III. The Life of Gratitude. This division shows that the doctrine to be presented, will be presented specifically as a doctrine of salvation, as Soteriology, as it really is, and is therefore a very practical division. Since then it has become usual to prefer a division which follows more closely the manner in which Systematic Theology is treated and which is better adapted to a systematic arrangement of the subject matter. Following such a division, we propose to treat the Doctrine of Faith in these divisions:

I. **The Doctrine of God.**—This is placed first, because redemption is "of Him, and through Him, and to Him";

II. **The Doctrine of Man,** who is the object of redemption;

III. **The Doctrine of the Mediator,** by whom redemption was wrought;

IV. **The Doctrine of the Dispensation of Grace,** which has been ordained by God as the way to salvation;

V. **The Doctrine of the Application of Grace** through the Holy Spirit;

VI. **The Doctrine of the Consummation of the World.**

FIRST DIVISION

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

48. **Fundamental Significance of the Doctrine of God.**—A Doctrine of Faith can begin its treatment of the truths of salvation in no more appropriate way than with the treatment of the Doctrine of God, for "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things," Rom. 11:36. Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, therefore is also the doctrine of salvation, and as such in every respect determined by what God is. Knowledge of God is the prerequisite of all religion, the prerequisite of faith, the prerequisite of salvation. Knowledge of God is eternal life itself, John 17:3.

The four main topics of the Doctrine of God are: His Names, His Essence, His Attributes, and His Works. Accordingly these are the four subjects of the four chapters in which this doctrine is to be treated.

> John 17:3, And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.

1. God's Names

49. **Why God has Given Himself Names.**—Names are used to distinguish persons and things from one another. For such a purpose the Lord has no need of a name, for He is one Lord, and there is none like unto Him. But the Lord has given Himself names in order to reveal Himself to us through them, and also that we might speak of Him in a proper way and in distinction from the idols.

50. **How the Lord has Made Himself Known to us through His Names.**—The names which God has given Himself are not empty sounds, as is generally the case with our names, but each of them has its significance, its meaning, and through this meaning they are revelations of God, teaching us what God is.

51. **The Names which God has given Himself**—Among the divine names belonging to the Old Testament dispensation is first of all to be mentioned the name Jehovah (Jahve), which in the Authorized Version, following the use of "kurios," lord, in the Septuagint, is translated by the word LORD (in capitals), while

the Revised Version uses Jehovah. The Lord Himself points out the meaning of this name in Exod. 3:14 as: "I am that I am." Through this name, therefore, the Lord reveals Himself as the unchangeable, faithful God, and that, as is evident from the succeeding verses of Exod. 3, as the God of the Covenant with the Fathers, the Covenant of Grace. Jehovah is His Covenant name. As Jehovah, the Covenant God, He will deliver Israel from Egypt, thereby manifesting in an unprecedented way His faithfulness in keeping His Covenant with the fathers. It is, therefore a name of a most precious significance for the Covenant people, Mal. 3:6; a name which shows how safely they may rely upon Him and expect all good things from Him. Other Old Testament names are: Elohim (the High One, the Exalted), El Shaddai (the Almighty), Adonai (Ruler of the universe), et al.

Exod. 3:14, And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel I AM hath sent me unto you.

Mal. 3:6, For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

In the New Testament, with its fuller revelation of the Trinity, the three Divine Persons reveal themselves as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The name Father has especially a glorious significance for the believers to assure them that He loves them and cares for them with the love and care of a father, the Father which is in heaven, Matt. 7:11. The believers of the Old Testament made striking pleas upon the names which God had given Himself, Ps. 33:22; 9:11; Prov. 18:10; showing thereby that they were well aware of that which their meaning implied, and in this they have set an example for us to follow.

Matt. 7:11, If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?

Ps. 33:22, Let Thy loving kindness, O Jehovah, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee.

Ps. 9:10, And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Jehovah, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.

Prov. 18:10, The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

2. God's Attributes

52. **What is Meant by God's Attributes.**—Every object and every being has attributes, which make it the object that it is. In the same way we speak of divine attributes (virtues, perfections), whereby we understand characteristics or qualities ascribed in Scripture to the Being of God.

53. **Whether there is in God a Diversity of Attributes.**—The

plural "attributes" seems to indicate that there is in God a plurality of attributes. One of the divine attributes, however, is simplicity, the opposite of multiplicity. Accordingly there is in God no multiplicity or diversity in any sense, nor a plurality of attributes. In Him there is but one attribute, in which all attributes are one unity. But it is impossible for finite beings as we are, to form a conception of such an attribute. And therefore the Lord, in order to meet this infirmity of our understanding, has revealed Himself to us as having different attributes.

54. **God's Attributes not Different from His Essence.**—From the divine simplicity it follows that there cannot be a dualism of Essence and attributes, as if one were something different from the other, and therefore that God's attributes cannot be anything than God Himself. In created beings and objects we distinguish between the object itself and its attributes. Not so in God. He not only lives, but He is life, and in the same way He is light, He is love.

55. **Division of the Divine Attributes.**—There are various divisions of the attributes of God, but not one of them is entirely satisfactory. The one most commonly employed among us is that of incommunicable and communicable attributes, according to the difference between such attributes which cannot be imparted to man, even though he is created in the image of God, and such attributes of which a distant resemblance can be imparted. As incommunicable attributes therefore those are enumerated which bear the character of absoluteness, so that the infinite God alone can possess them, and as communicable attributes those in which to some extent creatures can share.

56. **Objection against this Division.**—Objection can be made to this division on the ground that all God's attributes, as they are in Him, are absolute and incommunicable. Man has, for instance, received something of might and knowledge, and for that reason these are called communicable attributes. But in God these attributes are omnipotence and omniscience, and as such these attributes are decidedly incommunicable. Of omniscience and omnipotence nothing has been imparted to man. But other divisions are no less open to objections.

THE INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

57. The Incommunicable Attributes are:

1. Independency
2. Simplicity
3. Eternity
4. Omnipresence
5. Immutability

58. **How these Attributes are Defined.**

God's independency is that perfection of God whereby He has the cause of His existence in Himself, exists in and through Himself, and is dependent for His being on no one else, Acts 17:25.

God's simplicity is that perfection of God whereby there is in Him no composition of parts; whereby all in Him is one.

God's eternity is that perfection of God whereby He is exalted above time, so that with Him there is no past or future but an eternal present, 2 Pet. 3:8.

God's omnipresence is that perfection of God whereby He is exalted above space, so that to Him there is no point in the universe which is far or near. He is everywhere present, and that with His whole Being, Jer. 23: 23, 24.

God's immutability is that perfection of God whereby He remains eternally the same, so that with Him there is no increase or decrease of any kind, Mal. 3:6.

It seems to be contradictory to the immutability of God when it is said in the Scriptures that it "repented" the Lord that He had made man, Gen. 6:6, that He had set up Saul to be a king, 1 Sam. 15:11. Such expressions, however, are only examples which show how God reveals Himself to us in a way conformable to our understanding, and are no more to be taken literally than those instances where the Lord speaks of Himself as having bodily members. Repenting ascribed to God can only mean a change of action, occasioned by a change of circumstances, and necessary for the very reason that He remains ever the same, 1 Sam. 2:30.

Acts 17:25, Neither is served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

2 Pet. 3:8, But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Jer. 23:23,24, Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? saith Jehovah. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah.

Mal. 3:6, For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

1 Sam. 2:30, Wherefore Jehovah, the God of Israel, saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me forever: but now Jehovah saith, Be it far from Me; for them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.

THE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

59. **How they are Distinguished.**—The communicable attributes belong either to God's intelligence, to His will, or to His power; To His intelligence belong knowledge and wisdom; To His will belong goodness, holiness, and justice; and To His power belongs omnipotence.

60. **What is Meant by God's Knowledge.**—God's knowledge is that divine perfection, whereby He knows and comprehends all things in their inmost being, and that immediately. His knowledge is omniscience, Ps. 139:1.

> Ps. 139:1, 2, O Jehovah, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off.

61. **What is meant by God's Wisdom.**—God's wisdom is that divine perfection whereby He knows how to achieve the highest purposes by the best means.

62. **Distinction as to God's Will.**—As to God's will we have to distinguish between the secret will, or the will of His decree, and the revealed will, or the will of His command.

63. **Explanation of these Wills.**—Since God by His eternal counsel has decreed what was to be and was to occur, there must be a will in Him that this decree shall be executed.

And since God has given commands, there must be a will in Him that these commands shall be obeyed.

The former is called the will of His decree, because it is based on His eternal decree. And it is called His secret will, because His decree, and therefore His will based on it, are unknown to us.

The latter is called the will of His command, because it is based on His commands. And it is called His revealed will, because His commands, and therefore His will based on them, are known to us, being revealed in the Scriptures.

64. **The Difficulty Arising here.**—There are difficulties in this distinction. For, first of all, we know that because of the simplicity of God, so that in Him there can be no complexity in any sense, there can be in Him but one will. And yet we here arrive at a distinction between two wills, which are positively distinguished from one another. God's counsel is something very different from His command, and therefore the will of His counsel must be another than that of His command. And from our point of view they actually do differ. The will of His counsel is always executed, for God's counsel shall stand, Is. 46:10; but the will of His command, instead of being always executed, is constantly disobeyed by sin. There seems to be even a conflict between these two wills. Acts of disobedience to the law of God are contrary to His revealed will, but in accordance with the will of His decree, for nothing can happen contrary to that will, so that the same deed can be a deed that God wills, and at the same time does not will; a deed that God wills according to the will of His decree, and does not will according to the will of His command. Such, for instance, was the case

with the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus by the Jews, as is plainly stated in Acts 2:23. And the same being true of every sinful act, the two wills must be to our understanding constantly in opposition to one another.

Is. 46:10, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.

Acts 2:23, Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay.

65. **Necessity of this Distinction.**—One might ask whether we have a right to make this distinction, since it involves us in so serious a difficulty, the difficulty that there would seem to be in God something contradictory, which is impossible. It is a fact, however, that we cannot do otherwise as long as we acknowledge the reality of God's eternal decree, as well as of His commands, and consequently that all what is and what happens, sin and sinful acts not excepted, has been decreed in His eternal counsel. The difficulty is the result of the confusion caused by sin and of the obscurity of our understanding.

Besides, it is a distinction not made by man, but made in the Scriptures. When mention is made of the will of God, in some case no other than the secret will can be meant, for example Eph. 1:11, and in other cases it can be only the revealed will that is referred to, for example Rom. 12:2. Even the difficulty is implied in such passages as Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28; Gen. 50:20, where persons are upbraided for having done that which God's "hand and counsel foreordained to come to pass," and that without any effort to solve the problem, evidently since for us it cannot be solved. Instead of being offered a solution, we are warned by Scripture to leave the secret things to the Lord our God as belonging to Him, but to take to heart the revealed things as belonging to us and our children, that "we may do all the words of this law," Deut. 29:29. This is a plain and very serious admonition to refrain from every attempt to harmonize the secret and revealed things for our understanding whenever they may seem to be contradictory (Cf. §§ 96, 321).

Eph. 1:11, In whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will.

Rom. 12:2, And be ye not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Acts 4:27, 28, For of a truth in this city against Thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass.

Gen. 50:20, As for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

66. **The Attributes of the Will of God.**—The following outline may help us to get a clear view of the attributes belonging to God's will:

Goodness
Holiness
Righteousness
Grace
Mercy
Longsuffering, or Patience
Legislative Righteousness
Judicial Righteousness
Retributive Righteousness
Common Grace
Special, or Saving Grace

67. **God's Goodness.**—God's goodness is in general His goodwill unto all His creatures, especially unto His people, Ps. 145: 9, 10. It is called love when it reveals itself therein, that God gives Himself, John 3:16, 1 John 4:9. It further reveals itself variously according to the condition of the object on which it is bestowed: toward the guilty as grace, toward the miserable as mercy, toward the impenitent as longsuffering, or patience.

Ps. 145:9, 10, Jehovah is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Thy works shall give thanks unto Thee, O Jehovah; and thy saints shall bless thee.

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

I John 4:9, Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.

68. **Grace.**—God's grace is His love towards the guilty, especially as it is revealed in the salvation of sinners, Eph. 2:8. It is distinguished as common grace, which is directed to all mankind, and special (saving) grace, which is directed only to the elect.

Eph. 2:8, For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

69. **Common grace.**—By God's common grace is meant the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation upon all men, whereby sin and death are largely checked in their progress, so that the natural man does not sink in the abyss of corruption to the depth to which the devils sank into it, even though he also has severed himself from God.

It is because of this common grace that to such an extent as we see it, virtue and integrity still adorn social life, that a well regulated society can exist in which justice, order, and safety reign,

and that the Church of God can sojourn and develop itself in this world.

The larger measure of the blessings of common grace is received by the world, and not by the Church, or by the believers to whom the special grace has been granted. Thus, not the Church, but the world is most richly blessed with the temporal gifts of wealth, power, distinction, etc., and of talents for arts, science, invention. In all this the world "receives its good things in its lifetime," Luke 16:25.

70. **Mercy**—God's mercy is His goodness as manifested towards the miserable, His pity and compassion with our sufferings. What prompted the Samaritan to help the Jew, Luke 10:30-35, was not grace but mercy; it was the pitiful condition of the Jew that "moved him with compassion." It is wonderful to consider that in the Lord God, the God of infinite glory and bliss, there is such a compassion, such a sympathetic feeling with our miseries, such a being "afflicted in all our afflictions," Is. 63:9; that His great mercy was a motive to our redemption, 1 Pet. 1:3.

> 1 Pet. 1:3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

71. **Longsuffering.**—God's longsuffering is His goodness as manifested towards the impenitent, in sparing him, postponing punishment, prolonging the time for repentance and conversion, Rom. 2:4, as the God who has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live," Ezek. 33:11.

> Rom. 2:4, Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

72. **Holiness.**—God's holiness is that perfection of God by which He is separated from all sin and impurity, loathes this, and loves that which is good and pure. As God Himself is the highest good, the highest purity and perfection, His own Being must be the highest object of His love.

73. **Righteousness.**—God's righteousness is that perfection of God by which He maintains His holiness, manifesting His love for that which is good by rewarding it, and His aversion to evil by punishing the evil-doer. This shows that God's righteousness and holiness go hand in hand, that He could not be a God of spotless holiness, if He were not a God of the highest righteousness.

74. **God's Righteousness is Distinguished as:** a) a legislative righteousness, which lays down as law for us that which is good;

b) a judicial righteousness, which judges and lays sentence upon that which is done or neglected; c) a retributive righteousness, which metes out reward or punishment according to that which we have done.

75. **God's righteousness in the Sphere of Grace.**—Scripture teaches plainly that God's execution of righteousness in the sphere of grace, the sphere of the Covenant of Grace, in regard to those that are in Christ, in regard to His redeemed people, is different from that in the sphere of right, the sphere of the Covenant of Works, in regard to those that are without Christ, in regard to the world.

Outside of the sphere of grace, in regard to those that are not of Christ but of the world, the divine justice is that of the Covenant of Works, having for its standards on the one side the fact that God created man good and upright, in His image, and on the other the Law with its curse for "every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them," Gal. 3:10. For this justice, however, there can be no place in the sphere of grace. This justice can have no claim on them that are of Christ, and are by Him redeemed from the curse of the law, Gal. 3:13. They are not under the law but under grace, Rom. 6:14.

Still there is a justice in the sphere of grace. "We all," the believers not excepted, "must be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ," 1 Cor. 5:10. The believers too will be judged, will be judged according to their works, will receive the things done in the body, will receive reward or "suffer loss," 1 Cor: 3:15, and Christ, their Redeemer Himself, will be their judge. This justice, however, is of another nature, insofar that its standards are different. It will judge, on the one hand according to the law, not the law as the way to eternal life, the law of the Covenant of Works, the law with the curse, but the law as the rule for a godly life, the law of the Covenant of Grace, and without a curse; and on the other hand not our being created so as to be able to do all that the law demands, but the measure of grace and talents that have been given us, Luk. 10: 13, 19. This explains how it can be said of believers, that they will be judged according to their works; that the reward which they may receive, though rightly called a reward of grace, is ascribed to righteousness, Hebr. 6:10, 2 Tim. 4:8; and likewise even the forgiving of sins to those who confess them, 1 John 1:9. The judgment of the believers, therefore, will not be a judgment as to their salvation, for their names had been written in the book of life, Luk. 10:20, Rev. 21:27, and salvation is by grace only; but a judgment as to praise, and honor, and glory to be given them, Matt. 25:21, 23.

2 Cor. 5:10, For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the thing done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Hebr. 6:10, For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward His name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.

2 Tim. 4:8, Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing.

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all righteousness.

Matt. 25:21, His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

76. **God's Righteousness and His Love.**—To the absolute righteousness of God the objection has been made, that such a righteousness was incompatible with His love. Especially in our days the divine goodness has been used as an argument for the denial of an eternal damnation.

Against such reasoning it may be observed: a) that the love of God is not of the kind that is called love but is only weakness, like that of fond, indulgent parents, who spoil their children: b) that His own Being and His infinite virtues must be the highest object of His love, since there is nothing more amiable. To connive at sin, however, which violates His virtues, tramples them under foot, would be to love the sinner more than Himself, to love the sinner at the price of slighting the glory of His own perfections; c) that a God without righteousness in the most absolute sense would be unrighteous, and therefore also unholy; He would be imperfect, and no imperfect being can be God. To deny to God, the highest King and Judge, what is regarded as of the highest importance, even indispensable in an earthly prince and judge, is one of the follies of man's spiritual blindness.

77. **Might.**—God's might is almightiness, omnipotence. It is true, there are things that are impossible for Him; for instance, He cannot sin, He cannot die. For that reason it is stated in the definition, not that God can do all things, but that He can perform "all that is pleasing to Him." This, however, is no limitation of His omnipotence. To be a limitation, such inability would have to have its ground in something outside of God, but that is not the case. It has its ground in God's own Being; He cannot desire to sin, to die, because His own perfect Being makes that impossible. To be able to do a thing contrary to Himself would not be potency but impotence, not a perfection but a deficiency. To be able to perform absolutely everything that is pleasing unto Him, is absolute omnipotence.

The same is true in regard to God's sovereignty. This also is absolute. Still God is not sovereign to either punish sin or leave it unpunished, to either fulfill His promises or leave them unfulfilled, to either vindicate His virtues or suffer them to be violated. This, too, however, is not a limitation of his sovereignty because it has its ground in God Himself, in the fact that in a Being of the most glorious perfection, there cannot be anything contradictory.

3. The Essence of God. The Trinity

78. **What God is.**—Since we cannot grasp the Divine Essence, it cannot be described by us, except in terms the full meaning of which is also beyond our reach. Such a description is the following: God is a Spirit of infinite perfection, existing in three Persons. Emphasis must here be laid on "infinite," for the holy angels are also perfect spirits, but their perfection is finite, limited; their knowledge, their wisdom, their power have a limited scope. God, on the contrary, is the Infinitely Perfect.

79. **God not a Corporal Being.**—The description of God as a Spirit is intended to express that He does not have a body. To be a spirit and to have a body are set in contradistinction to one another in Luke 24:39. When in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, bodily members are ascribed to God, it is done for our sakes. It belongs to figurative language, of which much use is made in Scripture, because it is concrete, and the concrete appeals to the imagination and gives us a clearer conception. God's "arm" means His power, God's "hand" means His rule, God's "eye" and "ear" mean His observing of all that happens.

Luke 24:39, For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having.

80. **Such Representations not Dishonoring to God.**—Such human representations of God (anthropormophisms), which go still farther when even human emotions are ascribed to God, not excepting such as being grieved, Judg. 10:16, repenting, Gen. 6:6, are not dishonoring to God because man is created in the image of God. But there is a limit to this. The making of images to represent God is sternly forbidden in the second Commandment and in Deut. 4:15ff.

THE TRINITY

81. **God a Triune God.**—In considering the Essence of God, we must take notice principally of God's Trinity, i. e. that God exists One in Essence and Three in Persons.

82. **Old Testament Proofs for the Trinity.**—Although the time for a direct revelation of the Trinity had not yet come under the Old Testament dispensation, this truth was then already gradually unfolded, and that notwithstanding the fact that the oneness of God was constantly and earnestly impressed upon the Israelites, as a warning against the polytheistic idolatry of the neighboring peoples, Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4, etc. Old Testament indications of the Trinity are:

a) The texts where God speaks of Himself in the plural, Gen. 1:26; 3:22.

Gen. 1:26a, And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

Gen. 3:22a, And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.

b) The texts in which "Jehovah" and "Jehovah," or "Jehovah" and "Adoni" are mentioned as different Persons, Gen. 19:24; Ps. 110:1.

Gen. 19:24, Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven.

Ps. 110:1, Jehovah saith unto my Lord (Adoni), Sit thou at my right hand.

c) The texts where the three Persons are named and distinguished, Ps. 33:6; Is. 61:1; 63:9, 10.

Ps. 33:6, By the word (Cf. John 1:1-3) of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath (spirit) of His mouth.

Is. 61:1, The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon Me (the Messiah).

Is. 63:9, 10, In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them. ..... But they rebelled, and grieved His Holy Spirit.

83. **New Testament Proofs for the Trinity.**—The more direct and clear proofs for the Trinity are, however, to be found in the New Testament. Of these the principal ones are: the baptismal command, Matt. 28:19; the apostolic blessing, 2 Cor. 13:14; and 1 John 5:7.

Matt. 28:19, Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

2 Cor. 13:14, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

1 John 5:7, For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

84. **Equality of the Divine Persons.**—The three Persons are equal to each-other in glory and majesty and power; not one of the Persons is greater of less than the others. Such a difference there cannot be, for each Person possesses the whole Divine Being, not a portion of it, but the whole Divine Being. If one of the Persons in the Godhead possessed less than the whole Divine Being, He could

not be truly God. And that no Person can possess more than the whole Divine Being is self-evident. All possibility of one Person being more or less exalted than the others is therefore excluded. When the Lord Jesus said, My Father is greater than I, John 14:28, He spoke of Himself as the Mediator. As the second Person of the Holy Trinity He could say, and did say, I and My Father are one, John 10:30.

85. **The Three Persons Different Persons.**—Although partaking of the same Divine Being, and each Person possessing the whole of the Divine Being, the three Persons are different Persons. The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not meant, as has been contended by Unitarians, as but different names for one and the same Person, but as different names for different Persons. A passage of Scripture which shows this very plainly, as otherwise its contents would be absurd, is John 14:16.

John 14:16, And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever.

86. **Wherein the Persons are Distinguished from One Another.**—The difference between the Persons lies especially in manner of existence. The Father exists of Himself, the Son exists through generation from the Father, and the Holy Spirit exists through procession by spiration from both the Father and the Son.

These differences in manner of existence are called personal attributes, because each of them is peculiar only to one of the three Persons and not to the others, and in contradistinction to the attributes which have been treated in § § 52-77 (incommunicable and communicable attributes). These latter attributes are called essential attributes, because they are peculiar to the Divine Essence, and therefore to all the Persons equally.

From the difference in manner of existence follow other differences, viz.:

a) **In Names.** In agreement with the manner of existence the first Person is called Father, the second Person is called the Son, and the third Person is called the Holy Spirit. These names cannot be used interchangeably.

b) **In order.** The Father is the first Person, the Son is the second Person, and the Holy Spirit is the third Person. Neither can this order be inverted.

c) **In manner of working.** The Father, who exists of Himself, works of Himself through the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son, who is begotten of the Father, works of the Father through Himself and the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, works of the Father and the Son through Himself.

d) **In external works.** In regard to the external works of God the Theologians have spoken of the "economy of the Trinity," because different Persons take prominence in different works.

The Father, the first Person, appears in general as the representative of the Triune God, as the Maintainer of the right and majesty of God; more particularly those works are ascribed to Him which can be called the first, viz.: the decrees, to which belong the plan of salvation and predestination, creation, and providence.

The Son, the second Person, appears as the servant of the Father, to execute His counsel and fulfill His works; His particular task is that which can be called the second, viz.; to obtain salvation and to restore the Kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit, the third Person, has the third work, that of completing, adorning, bringing in consummation, especially in connection with the work of the Son, and therefore in particular the work of sanctification.

87. **Denial of the Trinity.**—Repeatedly in the history of the Church heretics have appeared by whom the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was denied. The Arians of the fourth century considered the Son the first of God's created beings, created before all other things out of nothing by an act of the will of God, existing therefore, not through generation, but through creation. The Socinians of Reformation days considered Him a mere human being, but of great excellence, whom God on account of His faithfulness unto death, His martyrdom for noble principles, raised to divine honor and pre-eminence, so that now we may accord Him divine honors. In our days the Unitarians and Modernists, and sects as the Mormons, the so-called Christian Scientists, the followers of "pastor" Russell, are the adversaries of this doctrine, of whom not a few even deny that Christ ever existed on earth as an historical person, so that according to them His likeness as pictured in the Gospels is to be regarded as an invention, be it in many respects a noteworthy invention.

In regard to the Holy Spirit these opponents of the Trinity claim that when Scripture speaks of Him, only a divine disposition or power is meant. Thus in general they deny in regard to the Son not His personality but His Divinity, and in regard to the Holy Spirit not His Divinity but His personality.

88. **Proofs for the Divinity of Christ.**—Scripture gives abundant evidence of the Divinity of Christ, the Son, by ascribing to Him:

a) **Divine Appellations.** He is expressly called God in John 1:1; Romans 9:5; 1 John 5:20.

John 1:1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Rom. 9:5, Whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

1 John 5:20, And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

b) **Divine Attributes,** incommunicable attributes, such as eternity, Mich. 5:2, omniscience, John 2:25; omnipotence, Rev. 1:8.

Mich. 5:2, But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

John 2:25, And because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man.

Rev. 1:8, I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

c) **Divine Works,** works requiring divine power or divine rights, such as creation and providence, John 1:3; Hebr. 1:3, the forgiving of sins, Luke 5:24, quickening of the dead, John 5:21.

John 1:3, All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made.

Hebr. 1:3, Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, ...

Luke 5:24, But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (He said unto him that was palsied), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house.

John 5:21, For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom He will.

d) **Divine Honor.** To Him is due the honor of adoration, Acts 7:59; baptism must be administered in His name, Matt. 28:19; to obtain salvation one must believe on Him, John 3:36; He has the right to the same honor as the Father, John 5:23.

Acts 7:59, And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Matt. 28:19, Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:36, He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 5:23, That all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent Him.

89. **Proofs for the Personality of the Holy Spirit.**—That the Holy Spirit is not a mere divine power, but a Person, is evident from the fact that to Him is ascribed that which can be peculiar only to a person, such as understanding, 1 Cor. 2:10, and will, 1 Cor. 12:11; He spoke to Philip, Acts 8:29; He teaches and brings to remembrance, John 14:26; He makes intercession for us in unutterable groanings, Rom. 8:26.

1 Cor. 2:10b, For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

1 Cor. 12:11, But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will.

Acts 8:29, And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

John 14:26, But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.

Rom. 8:26, And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

90. **Generation and Spiration.**—The generation of the Son and the spiration of the Holy Spirit are deeds within the Divine Being (internal works) concerning which nothing more is revealed to us in the Scriptures, and which are utterly incomprehensible to us. This much may be said: a) that they are not deeds by which the Divine Essence is increased, but deeds which are the grounds of existence for a second and a third Person within the Divine Being; — b) that they are deeds of a different nature, as is evident from this that the generation is of the Father alone, while the spiration is of both the Father and the Son; — c) that they are both eternal acts, acts which have never begun and which never end.

91. **Elucidation of the Trinity by Illustrations from Nature.**—Efforts have been made to elucidate the Trinity and render it a trifle more comprehensible by analogies from nature, such as the triangle, the triad in music, the triad of head, heart, and hand in man, etc. They are indeed examples of a trinity, but not of such a one as the Divine Trinity is. Of a triangle, for instance, not every angle has the entire triangle; nor has every tone of a chord the entire chord. And that which is incomprehensible in the Trinity is exactly this that the three Persons are a unity of which each Person possesses the same whole Divine Essence.

92. **Belief in the Trinity Necessary to Salvation.**—The Trinity of God is the foundation of the entire way of salvation, so that it cannot be denied without denying the whole of the truths of the Gospel. To be saved, we need each Person of the Trinity, and each Person as very God. Christ cannot be a Redeemer, nor the Holy Spirit a Sanctifier, without being a Divine Person. Saving faith must be faith in Christ as the Son of God, John 9:35; 20:31.

John 9:35, Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, He said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

John 20:31, But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name.

4. God's Works

93. **The Works of God Distinguished.**—The works of God are distinguished in the following manner:

I. Intrinsic Works (Generation and Spiration)
II. Extrinsic Works
  1. Works in eternity (the Decrees)
  2. Works in time
    a. Works in nature (Creation and Providence
    b. Works in grace (those of Salvation)

In this chapter not all the works of God are to be treated, since the intrinsic works have been treated, and the works of grace must be treated later. The works of God which will be treated here are:

a) the Decrees (including the Covenant of Redemption and Predestination);
b) Creation;
c) Providence.

a. The Decrees

1 THE DECREES IN GENERAL

94. **What God's Decree is.**—God's Decree is that work of God in eternity whereby He, knowing all that was possible, from all that was possible with absolute freedom and wisdom chose and determined whatever should exist and happen. It is the first of God's extrinsic works, i. e., those works whereby things outside of the divine Being were brought into being. Scripture speaks of that Decree as His "counsel," His "pleasure," Is. 46:10. His "purpose," the "counsel of His will," Eph. 1:11, etc.

Is. 46:10b, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.
Eph. 1:11, In Whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will.

95. **Attributes of God's Decrees.**—The principal attributes of God's Decree are:

a) **Eternity.** The other extrinsic works of God are within the pale of time, but the Decrees belong to eternity, Acts 15:18.

Acts 15:18, Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.

b) **Freedom.** In making His Decrees God was not constrained by anything outside of Himself; that He decreed as He did was due only to His own good pleasure, Matt. 11:26.

Matt. 11:26, Yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.

c) **Wisdom.** The Counsel as a whole, every decree in particular, the relation of the decrees to each other, everything answers to God's purpose so perfectly that improvement upon, or dissatisfaction with any of the decrees is impossible, Rom. 11:33.

> Rom. 11:33, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!

d) **All-comprehensiveness.** God's Decrees cover everything; nothing, however insignificant in our eyes, is omitted, neither is sin, Eph. 1:11.

e) **Unchangeableness.** From the freedom, wisdom, all-comprehensiveness of the Decree it follows, that nothing can ever happen that God has not foreseen, or that would require addition, change, or improvement of the Decree, Is. 46:10.

96. **Difficulties Involved in these Truths.**—Belief in an unchangeable Decree of God is according to Scripture, and also very reasonable. It would be most unreasonable to think that God would have begun His works without having beforehand made an all-embracing, perfect plan. Still, this belief involves us in very serious difficulties.

In the first place, this doctrine seems to lead inevitably to Fatalism or Determinism. Fatalism teaches that everything happens according to an inexorable necessity, that man in his whole life is controlled by an unyielding fate. Similarly Determinism teaches that everything has been determined, and so happens as has been determined, so that there can be no moral freedom of man. Both involve a denial of man's responsibility, for if man sins from absolute necessity, he cannot be held responsible for his sin.

Scripture, however, teaches both an unchangeable decree of God, and the responsibility of man for all that he does or leaves undone, 2 Cor. 5:10. The manner in which God carries out His Decree is such that the moral freedom of man, by which he does as he does, is not limited in any way, and consequently his responsibility remains intact. How this is possible passes our understandng, but we have no need of knowing.

Another difficulty is the hearing of prayer. If all things are determined by an unchangeable Decree, can then prayer be of any avail? Can there be real hearing of prayer, real granting of what we prayed for "because thou besoughtest Me" (Matt. 18:32)? The remark that prayer was also included in the Decree is true enough, but offers no explanation. It implies that we pray because it was decreed, and receive because it was decreed, which sounds as pure determinism, but not as an explanation of real hearing of prayer. Still Scripture teaches in unmistakable terms that there is real hearing of prayer. In Luke 11:5-13 the Lord Jesus sought to

impress this deeply into the hearts of the disciples, first by the parable of the Impertinent Friend (5-8), then by direct assertions: Ask, and it shall be given you, etc. For every one that asketh receiveth, (9-10) etc., and finally by referring to what we do, we fathers who are evil, when a son prays for what he needs, with the assurance: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (11-13). Likewise the parable of the Unjust Judge, which was evidently intended to point out the power of persistent prayer as a means to obtain what otherwise surely would not have been obtained, Luke 18:1-8. And in the Epistle of James we read: ye have not, because ye ask not (4:2); The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months (5:16, 17). How much real hearing of prayer is consistent with an unchangeable Decree, Scripture does not explain. We can only say, what would be impossible with men is possible with God. No Christian may think, as the Mohammedans do, that by His eternal counsel God has deprived Himself of His absolute freedom.

Here we have again to heed the warning of Deut. 29:29, and to obey it by accepting both truths, without straining the one to conform it to the other (Cf. § 320 ff.).

2 PREDESTINATION

97. **What is meant by Predestination.**—In accordance with Art. 16 of our Confession Predestination is to be defined as the eternal and unchangeable counsel of God, whereby He has elected in Christ certain definite individuals of fallen humanity to salvation, and has left the remainder in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.

Thus Predestination consists in two parts: election and reprobation. In election God has shown His mercy, and in reprobation His righteousness.

98. **Predestination and God's General Decree.**—The fact that a special name has been given to this decree does not mean that we must regard it as a special and independent decree. It belongs to God's general decree and is most closely related to it. For our being saved or not is most intimately connected to our living since each one will receive the things done in the body, and therefore a decree concerning the first must be most intimately connected with the second.

99. **Is Concerned with Definite Persons.**—That election and

reprobation is concerned with definite persons is clearly taught in Rom. 9:13.

> Rom. 9:13, Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

100. **The Ground of Election and Rejection.**—The ground for the election of the one and the rejection of the other is not to be found in the person, not that one is more worthy of being elected or rejected than another, but only in the free and sovereign pleasure of God. Rom. 9:18, 21.

> Rom. 9:18, 21, So then he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

101. **This Is Not Unrighteous.**—This does not stamp predestination as unjust, for God might justly have suffered all men to perish. And if His mercy and grace save some, the others suffer no injury thereby.

102. **Election and the Line of the Covenant.**—Not seldom it has been thought that election is of a sporadic nature so that one is elected from this family and another from that family, "one from a city and two from a generation" irrespective of family or city or generation. The fact, however, that the Lord has ever built up His Church from the seed of the Covenant teaches that as a rule predestination follows a definite course, proceeding along the line of the Covenant, so that as a rule those are elected who are participants in the Covenant. This is encouraging for the Covenant members, but, as we see from Scripture and experience that there are exceptions to this rule, it gives no ground for false assurances.

103. **Opposition to this Doctrine.**—From of old there have been those who have shown themselves hostile to the doctrine of predestination. Objections to it were and are that it entails an accusation against God of hardness and unrighteousness; that it makes wicked and careless persons; that man still has a free will to choose the good and the ability to do it, at least as far as faith and repentance are concerned, so that his being saved depends, not on a divine election, but on the use which he makes of this free will, etc. And such teaching found great acceptance because it is much more pleasing to man's proud heart than is the doctrine of Predestination, for the latter takes from man all honor for his salvation, and in this fact the main cause is to be found of the aversion and rejection of the doctrine of Predestination.

The doctrine of Predestination was fought as early as the fifth century by Pelagius, and although opposed by Augustine, and con-

demned by several Church Councils, Pelagianism soon permeated the entire Christian Church. After the Reformation it was especially Arminius († 1609) who appeared with a similar doctrine and with a similar result. After a most intense struggle a signal victory was gained over Arminianism at the great Synod of Dordt 1618-'19, where also a number of Reformed Churches of Germany and England were represented, but that victory was not lasting. Slowly Arminianism revived, and at present not only the Wesleyan Methodist Churches, which are avowedly Arminian, but almost all Churches are infected with Arminianism, in spite of Calvinistic Standards.

104. **Vindication of the Doctrine of Predestination.**—Of all such Arminian objections as the above mentioned it may confidently be said that they are vain, and that they can only tend to hide an aversion to the sovereignty of God and to a way of salvation through grace only. For:

a. Predestination is simply an undeniable fact. Do we not in our daily life see ourselves continually surrounded by evidences of sovereign pre-arrangement? When one is born rich and another poor, and, as a result, one lives in luxury while the other spends his days in want; when one is healthy and another weak and constantly suffering; when one is greatly gifted mentally and another not at all but may even have to undergo the sufferings of blindness, dumbness, or of idiocy; do all these not reveal a sovereign predestination? Can anyone deny this as long as he believes that not chance but a living God reigns? One may say also of this kind of predestination that it is hard and unjust, if he is so minded; but with the cold facts before his eyes no one can say that there is no such predestination.

b. Such a doctrine causes people to become careless and godless, it is said. But surely, the vast throng that has held fast to this confession has not been a throng of careless and godless people! Reality is right at hand with which to give the lie to this charge. Only this is to be admitted, that there have ever been those who have misused the doctrine. But is, for instance, God's longsuffering to be denied, because it is so fearfully misused, Eccl. 8:11? For such misuse, not the doctrine, but man's depravity is to blame. This is evident from the fact that such people proceed in an entirely different manner in regard to the natural things than they do in regard to the spiritual and eternal things. Believing in Predestination, they also believe that in God's eternal decree it was decided, for instance, what crop they will harvest from their fields down to the last kernel. Now, from Predestination they draw the conclusion: If I am of the elect, I shall surely be saved; but if I am not, there is no escape; and so they live carelessly. At the

same time, however, they are far from drawing a similar conclusion from God's decree concerning their temporal things. Instead they show themselves well aware of the fact that if they do not sow, they will not reap.

c. Vain is also the assumption that as to faith and repentance man can help himself, so that if only a way to salvation is opened, it can be left to him to avail himself of it. According to Scripture the truth is that man by nature is spiritually dead, so that for his salvation a Savior is needed who is the resurrection and the life, John 11:25; that the carnal mind is enmity (not inimical only but enmity) against God, Rom. 8:7, and loves the darkness rather than the light, John 3:19. From this it follows conclusively that in order to be saved man needs much more than a moral improvement, that he needs a regeneration, a new birth, John 3:3, that he needs to be made a new creature, of which can be said, "the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new," 2 Cor. 5:17; that he needs not only the acquisition but also the application of salvation, and that, because of his enmity against God, his loving the darkness rather than the light, this application must be accomplished by an irresistible working of the Holy Spirit. Consequently when one comes to faith and repentance and the other not, it is because through the irresistible working of the Holy Spirit the one was brought to faith and repentance and the other not. Now the question is: Why is it that the Holy Spirit in an irresistible manner works faith and repentance in the one and not in the other and to this question the only answer can be: Because the one was elected unto salvation and the other not. This is the answer of Scripture when it says: So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy, Rom. 9:16, and: As many as were ordained to eternal life believed, Acts 13:48. Without predestination no one would ever believe, no one would ever will or run, no one would ever be saved. To will and to run are fruits of the Spirit; the cause of salvation, however, is not our willing or running, but God that has mercy.

d. Finally it must not be forgotten that if we reject a decree of God with respect to man's eternal state, we must also reject a decree of God with respect to man's life. For these two are as inseparable as our present life and our future state are inseparable Each one will receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. 5:10. If king Saul had been one of the elect, his whole life would have been different, and the divine decrees concerning his life would have been different. Divine decrees concerning our lives and divine ruling of our lives are impossible without divine decree and divine ruling concerning our eternal destination. And decrees and rulings concerning the history of the nations would be impossible without

divine decrees and rulings concerning individuals. Denial of predestination must end, therefore, in denial of a divine plan and of divine government of the world. Then the comfort derived from the absolute government of God fails us, and we are left to the despairing thought that corrupted men and corrupted powers rule the world, yea, rule even God.

> Ps. 97:1, Jehovah reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad.

105. **Predestination and other Points of Doctrine.**—The great significance of the doctrine of Predestination is evident from its close connection with several other points of doctrine. Aside from the fact that without Predestination and without a Covenant of Redemption there would be no way of salvation, the doctrine of Predestination is of great significance for other important parts of the doctrine of salvation, so that they stand or fall with Predestination. These parts are: a) the total depravity and spiritual death of the natural man (Cf. § 177) ; — b) the necessity of regeneration (Cf. § 376) ; — c) the perseverance of the saints (Cf. § 465) ; — d) the vicarious work of the Lord Jesus (Cf. § 212) ; — e) the assurance of faith concerning our salvation (Cf. § 437), all truths which, together with Predestination are maintained by Calvinism, but rejected by Pelagianism.

106. **Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism.**—Since this question has an important bearing on the doctrine of salvation (Soteriology) we cannot leave it undiscussed here.

The term "Supralapsarianism" is derived from the words "supra" (above) and "lapsus" (fall), and similarly "infralapsarianism" from "infra" (below) and "lapsus." The parties are so called in connection with their idea concerning the place which must be considered the proper place of Predestination in the "order of decrees" related to it; whether the decree of Predestination is to be placed before that of the fall (supra lapsus), or after that of the fall (infra lapsus). Both parties assume an "order of decrees," i. e., an order in which the decrees concerning Predestination followed one another, but they differ in regard to that order itself.

According to the Supra view the order of decrees was this:

1. The decree to elect of possible (creatable) men some to salvation and others to damnation, for the end of His own glory.

   Then follow as a means to that end:

2. The decree to create those already elected and reprobated.
3. Te decree to permit them to fall.
4. The decree to provide salvation for the elect.

And according to the Infra view the order of decrees was this:

1. The decree to create men.
2. The decree to permit the fall.
3. The decree to elect out of fallen humanity some to eternal life, and to leave the others in their lost condition.
4. The decree to provide salvation for the elect.

The main points of difference resulting from this are the following: a) that according to Supra in Predestination its objects have been viewed as not yet fallen, and according to Infra as already fallen; — b) that according to Supra election and reprobation referred to "possible" men, concerning whom it was not yet decided whether they would be created and would be made actual men, while according to Infra they referred to men whose creation was already decided upon; — c) that according to Supra reprobation was a decree of God to destine, for the glorification of His righteousness, certain men, as yet regarded as unfallen, to perdition, but according to Infra it was a decree to leave a portion of mankind, regarded as fallen to the just consequences of their sins.

107. **Arguments Pro and Contra.—**

1. Supralapsarianism proceeds mainly from the sovereignty of God, and adduces as proofs:

a. That the Scriptures teach and strongly emphasize the sovereignty of God in such places as Prov. 16:4; Is. 10:15; 45:9; Matt. 20:15; Rom. 9:15-21.

> Prov. 16:4, Jehovah hath made everything for His own end; yet, even the wicked for the day of evil.
>
> Is. 10:15, Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Shall the saw magnify itself against him that wieldeth it? as if a rod should wield them that lift it up, or as if a staff should lift up him that is not wood.
>
> Is. 45:9, Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?
>
> Matt. 20:15, Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good?
>
> Rom. 9:15-21, For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth. .....Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

b. That due maintainance of the absolute sovereignty of God demands such a presentation of Predestination, such a presentation even of reprobation. He who accepts the absolute sovereignty

of God must admit that God has the right for His glorification to destine for perdition persons viewed as unfallen, and must feel no necessity of making attempts to justify Him.

c. That logical thinking inevitably results in such a presentation. It is certain that the highest purpose of everything is the honor and glory of God. This purpose must therefore have determined the entire decree of God, and consequently must be placed as the first in the order of decrees, with the other decrees as means to this end.

d. That Scripture also speaks of election in regard to the angels, 1 Tim. 5:21, and in a decree regarding their election or reprobation the angels cannot have been considered as fallen, for the elect angels never have fallen, and of the fallen angels none have been redeemed.

2. In defense of Infralapsarianism the main argument is that the Scriptures very clearly bring Predestination in direct contact with sin.

a. By teaching that election has been an election in Christ, Eph. 1:4. "The Church and Christ were elected together in one decree, in communion with and for each other." The election of Christ was an election to be Mediator and Redeemer. There could not be an election of a Redeemer apart from an election of sinners to be redeemed, and there could not be an election of sinners to be redeemed apart from the election of a Redeemer. This being "chosen in Christ" points to the being chosen as fallen creatures. Besides, in connection with this being "chosen in Him" it is further stated in Eph. 1:4, that the aim of this being chosen in Him was, "that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love." This "should be" implies that they were not viewed as such.

With this being elected in Christ also seems to be at variance the idea that in Predestination the elect must have appeared, not as created, but as creatable (possible) persons. For from the unity of the decree of election, which concerned both Christ and the Church, must follow that, if in that decree the elect appeared as possible persons, then Christ, too, must have appeared as a possible Christ. This notion has actually been proposed, but it has found no favor.

> Eph. 1:4, Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love.

b. By presenting election and reprobation as deeds of mercy and righteousness, as is done in places where mention is made of "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy," Rom. 9:22, 23; of "grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal," 2 Tim. 1:9; of "elect .... unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. 1:2. Even in Rom. 9:17-21, the main

passage quoted in support of Supralapsarianism, the words "hath mercy" and "hardeneth" are used. And in v. 13 it is said: "Esau I hated"; can this mean: hated as unfallen, possible creature, or must it mean: hated as sinner? Is the absolute sovereignty of God to be considered as absolute arbitrariness?

3. In refutation of the supralapsarian arguments the Infralapsarians have this to say:

a. Regarding due maintainance of the sovereignty of God:

That it is in no wise a violation of the divine sovereignty to take it that it does not mean a sovereignty to do absolutely everything, even that which is contrary to His own Essence and virtues (Cf. § 77). For the same reason that it cannot be a sovereignty to leave sin go unpunished, it may be said that it cannot be a sovereignty to destine persons viewed as unfallen to eternal damnation. Not because of any rights on our part over against Him, for such there are none, but because of His own perfections, especially His love, His love towards His handiwork as expressed in John 3:16.

(2) Regarding logical thinking:

a. That logical thinking would inevitably lead us here to making God the cause of sin, which the Supralapsarist abhors as well as the Infralapsarist.

b. That therefore the Supralapsarist himself does not dare to follow his logical thinking to the end. He does not dare to say that God caused man to fall, but only, the same as the Infralapsarist, that God permitted man to fall. There he leaves the way of logical thinking.

c. That our logical thinking fails us time and again in our attempts to grasp and to explain divine truths, because "we know in part," and "see into a mirror darkly," 1 Cor. 13:9, 12, and that therefore we had better discard our logic than let it lead us to a theory that cannot but foster a feature of Satan's image in our hearts, namely to have hard thoughts concerning God.

d. That it seems the right way in order to find the truth and to understand it, to try to see things from the divine standpoint. But can we? May we? May we even when it concerns the impenetrable depths of His eternal counsel? Is not God's own way in His special revelation just the opposite, a way of placing Himself on our standpoint and dealing with us in a manner conformable to what we are?

How little we are able to do it is evident from our speaking of an "order of the decrees." We have to do that, because as finite beings we have to take things apart and to consider the parts one by one. But God is the Infinite. For Him there cannot have been an "order of the decrees." For Him it cannot be necessary as for us, that there must be a first decree before a second can be made, but for Him the first and the last, the beginning and the end are

one, and the formation of the entire decree must have been one act of the infinite God.

(3) Regarding the election of angels, that nothing of the character of this election is revealed to us, it being only mentioned, and that only once, 1 Tim. 5:21. We have no right first to determine on our own hand the character of that election, and then to draw conclusions from the character we ascribed to it for the character of the election of men, who are an entirely different order of creatures. As a point of difference we may safely mention that in regard to the elect angels it must have been decreed not to permit their fall, whereas in regard to men the opposite was determined.

108. **This Question and the Doctrinal Standards.**—In the Catechism Predestination is not expressly treated, but what the Church believes regarding this truth is fully but briefly stated in the Confession of Faith and in the Canons of Dort, and in both Standards in a decidedly infralapsarian manner.

In Art. 16 of the Confession of Faith the Church confesses the following:

> We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just: Merciful, since He delivers and preserves from perdition all, whom He, in His eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness hath elected in Jesus Christ our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.

And the Canons of Dort describe in the same manner the objects of Predestination as "fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction," and "involved in one common misery" (I, 7) as follows:

> Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

In the Doctrinal Standards of the Reformed Churches in other lands there is not one in which the supralapsarian interpretation is supported. There are some which purposely leave the question undecided, such as the Westminster Confession, and yet even in this Confession (III, 7) it is said of the rejected that they are "ordained to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glory and justice."

109. **The Conclusions of Utrecht 1905 and Predestination.**—

Regarding the supra and infra question the Synod of Utrecht in 1905 made the following declaration, which was adopted by our Synod in 1908:

> Concerning Infra- and Supralapsarianism, the Synod declares that our Doctrinal Standards certainly give an infralapsarian presentation of the doctrine of election, but that, as is evident as well from the wording of Chap. I, Art. 7 of the Canons of Dort, as from the discussions of the Synod of Dort, it is by no means meant that the supralapsarian interpretation is thereby excluded or condemned; that, therefore, there is no right on the one hand to present the supralapsarian view as being properly the doctrine of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, nor on the other hand to annoy anyone who has accepted the supralapsarian interpretation for himself, since the Synod of Dort did not make a decision regarding this point of difference. To this the Synod adds the warning to bring such profound doctrines, which are beyond comprehension of plain people on the pulpit as little as possible, and to adhere to the presentation given in our Doctrinal Standards in the preaching of the Word and in catechetical instruction.

110. **Practical Significance of this Question.**—The question in itself, as treated in the preceding paragraphs, is of no practical import. How in this respect Predestination must be interpreted is not a matter which has any bearing on the edification of those who believe. But this cannot be said of the supra and infra question in its entire scope, for especially as we have to deal with it now, it has a bearing on a much broader field of the truth.

More than in the days of Dort it has been in our time the object of Supralapsarianism to make the sovereignty of God the fundamental and governing principle not only of the doctrine of Predestination, but also of the truths which belong to the Dispensation of Grace and the Application of Grace (Ecclesiology and Soteriology). This is said to be placing ourselves on divine standpoint, as necessary to see things as God sees them, to see things as they really are, to see the truth. It may be a question, however, whether it is not safer for us, and more in accordance to the will of God, to try to see things simply as they are presented in Scripture. Then it is certain that we see them as God wants us to see them; that we will see the truth as God Himself has pointed it out to us.

Later on we will show (Cf. §362) that in regard to the Covenant of Grace, Baptism, even the Gospel, and in regard to regeneration, faith, justification this supralapsarian trend leads to views which differ from those of our infralapsarian Confessional Standards. For Infralapsarianism leads our thinking in a somewhat different direction. While likewise endeavoring to maintain the sovereignty of God, it firmly believes that also another principle is to be maintained, viz. that of the personality and responsibility of man, as created in the image of God. So it is said in the Canons of Dort (III and IV, 16) in regard to the grace of regeneration, that this

grace "does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor takes away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto."

It is therefore in regard to the truths belonging to God's dealings with man in bringing him to salvation, that the supra and infra question becomes of vital interest for the Congregation. Supralapsarians of repute have not refused to admit that one cannot be supralapsarian in the preaching of the Gospel. Spanheim, one of the old theologians, declared openly that he was supralapsarian in his study, but infralapsarian in teaching the Congregation. The question arises whether an interpretation, which attracts in the study, but is found a hindrance for preaching the Gospel, can be the right one?

3 THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION

111. **Three Covenants.**—The Scriptures teach us to distinguish three Covenants of God, all of which belong to the plan and way of salvation. These are: 1. the Covenant of Redemption, also called the Council of Peace, 2. the Covenant of Works, 3. the Covenant of Grace.

The first belongs to the eternal counsel of God, is established by the Divine Persons among Themselves, and is the foundation of the other two. In this Covenant the plan of salvation is established in all its parts; in it the salvation of the elect is guaranteed; and without it no redemption is possible. The other two have been established in time, have been established by the Triune God with men, for the sake of the execution of the first named Covenant.

The Covenant of Redemption stands in closest connection with election, since in this Covenant the manner is established in which they who have been ordained to salvation shall become saved. For this reason and because it belongs to the works of God in eternity, the treatment of this Covenant is in order at this place, while the other two shall be treated later.

112. **What is Meant by the Covenant of Redemption.**—Since but little has been revealed to us concerning this Covenant, but little can be said. We do, however, find certain things mentioned in the Scriptures and from them the following can be concluded:

a) That in eternity an agreement has been made among the three divine Persons with respect to the restoration of the Kingdom of God and the salvation of the elect.

b) That in this Covenant the Father has appeared as first Party (Maker of the Testament), who has demanded and promised, and the Son has appeared as the second Party (Heir, Hebr. 1:2), who has accepted these demands and promises.

c) That the Father has entrusted the Son with providing, as

Mediator of God and of man, satisfaction for the divine righteousness by becoming man, by placing Himself under the Law, by obeying it perfectly not only, but also by suffering and dying for the satisfaction of its demands which had been violated through sin. Further that the Father has promised to the Son, as a reward for the execution of this task, a special glory as Mediator and King, has granted Him the elect as His own, and has promised Him their complete salvation and redemption. And finally, that the Son has accepted both the task and the reward. The part of the Holy Spirit in this Covenant was, that He took upon Himself to apply this merited redemption according to the will of the Father and the Son.

113. **Proofs for the Covenant of Redemption.**—Scriptural proofs for the Covenant of Redemption are those in which mention is made of the work of Christ and of the elect as His own, as given to Him by the Father, John 17:4; 6:39, likewise of His Kingdom as appointed unto Him by the Father, Luke 22:29, and of His glory as a Mediator as a joy set before Him, Hebr. 12:2, or as a reward for the work of redemption, Phil. 2:9. Also in Ps. 2:7, 8 this Covenant is evidently meant. In these passages all the elements of a Covenant are indicated, viz. parties, the matter concerned, the demands and promises, and the mutual agreement.

John 17:4, I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do.

John 6:39, And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all that which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

Luke 22:29, And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as My Father appointed unto Me.

Hebr. 12:2, Looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Phil. 2:9, Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name.

Ps. 2:7, 8, I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto Me, Thou art My Son; This day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for Thy possession.

b. Creation

114. **To Which Works of God Creation Belongs.**—Creation belongs to the external works of God, and further, to the external works in time. Of these Creation was the first work, the first work toward the execution of the Decree.

115. **The Act of Creating.**—To create is to bring something into existence which before did not exist, and that by the act of an

almighty will alone, Gen. 1:3; Ps. 33:9. Creating is therefore something entirely different from making.

Gen. 1:3, And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Ps. 33:9, For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

116. **Agent and Time of Creation.**—God has created everything through the Word, i. e. through the Son, John 1:3. As to the time, distinction is made between a first creation, that of the crude material, the chaos, which took place in a moment, and a second creation, that of the succeeding ordering acts. Still in Exod. 20:11 it is said of the entire creation: For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is.

John 1:3, All things were made through Him (the Word); and without Him was not anything made that hath been made.

117. **When the Angels were Created.**—Concerning the creation of the angels it can only be said that they were not created before the beginning mentioned in Gen. 1:1, for then that would not have been the beginning; and according to Gen. 2:1, they were not created after the end of the sixth day. It has been held that they were created on the first day at the same time as the heavens, and also with reference to Job 38:6, 7 and Ps. 104:3-5, that they were created between the second and third days, assuming that "fastening the foundations thereof" (of the earth) of Job 38:6, and "laying the foundations of the earth" of Ps. 104:5 refer to the work of the third day.

Gen. 1:1, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Gen. 2:1, And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Job 38:6, 7, Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Ps. 104:3-5, Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; Who maketh the clouds His chariot; Who walketh upon the wings of the wind; Who maketh winds His messengers, (or His angels winds, His angels spirits); Flames of fire His ministers; Who laid the foundations of the earth. That it should not be moved for ever.

118. **The Holy Angels.**—In Hebr. 1:14 the holy angels are described as "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." These words indicate a remarkable point of difference between angels and men, the latter having been created in the image of God to have dominion, Gen. 1:26.

119. **Origination of Sin among the Angels.**—It is utterly inexplicable for us how it was possible that sin could originate in the holy world of the angels. But it happened. 1 Tim 3:6 leads us

to conclude that pride was the cause which made some of them "not keep their own principality (their original state) but leave their proper habitation," Jude. 6, because there it is ordered that a novice must not be made bishop (elder, overseer), "lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil," i. e. the condemnation into which the devil fell on account of pride.

120. **The Devils.**—That the devil has great power in nature and can do fearful things when he is allowed to exercise that power, is evident from the story of Job. It was he who caused the enemy to attack, fire to fall from heaven, a great wind to blow. In other places of Scripture he and his host is spoken of as "the prince of this world," John 12:31, "the prince of the powers of the air," Eph. 2:2, "principalities, powers, world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places," Eph. 6:12. No less great is his power in the moral world. He can influence persons, Eph. 2:2, believers included, 1 Chron. 21:1. He is "the old serpent, the deceiver of the whole world," Rev. 12:9; "a murderer from the beginning," John 8:44; "a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. 5:8. And although he is not omniscient, no more than he is omnipotent, he has a great knowledge, even of our inner life, and a hellish cunning; and because of their vast number, the devils are almost everywhere, always observing. The notion that he can appear in bodily form is superstition. He cannot appear in such a form, because he has no creative power to make it. Repeatedly we read in the Scriptures of appearances of angels in human form, but never of devils. In Paradise he was permitted to use the snake. Whether or not Satan appeared in any visible form when tempting the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, we are not told. It may be assumed that for this purpose no visible form was needed, since the spirits were not concealed from Christ.

Over against this hellish power of Satan it is an invaluable blessing for the world, and especially for the believers that God reigns, and that therefore Satan can never go farther than the Lord permits. Otherwise he would surely make this world into a hell, and especially give vent to his wrath against the people of God. There is a reason, therefore, why the Lord taught us to pray: "deliver us from the evil one." Besides, we are admonished: "resist the devil," with the promise added: "and he will flee from you," James 4:7. Thus we must be co-workers with God in the struggle against the powers of darkness, in order that we may share in the glory of the victory, when our Lord shall appear to destroy these powers for ever.

Eph. 6:12, For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this

darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Eph. 2:2, Wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.

1 Chron. 21:1, And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.

121. **Purpose of Creation.**—The purpose for which all things were created is the honor and glorification of God, Prov. 16:4. Creation answered this purpose gloriously in its perfect state before the fall; it still answers this purpose in spite of sin, Ps. 19:1; and it will answer this purpose more perfectly than ever when the work of the Mediator shall be completed, when He shall have crushed the power of hell, and shall have purified the creation of God from all defilement and injury wrought by Satan through sin.

Prov. 16:4, Jehovah hath made everything for its own end (or, for his own purpose); yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Ps. 19:1, The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

122. **Importance of the Doctrine of Creation.**—Creation of all things by God is the basis of two very important truths, viz., of the sovereignty of God over the world and of the love of God for the world.

From the fact that God has created all things, has created them from nothing, it follows that everything is His own in the most absolute sense of the word, and that, therefore, to Him must belong the sovereign freedom to do with the hosts of heaven and with the inhabitants of the earth according to His good pleasure. As Creator of the universe He must be fully entitled to be its King, Lawgiver, and Judge. And we, being His creatures, having received from Him all that we are and have, thus belonging to Him with all that we are and have, must be under the deepest obligation to make His service the highest aim of our life, and to know ourselves wholly dependent on Him and responsible to Him. On the other hand, denial of the doctrine of creation implies a denial of the relation in which we stand to God and He to us, a denial of His absolute sovereignty over the world and over us, and of our absolute dependence on and responsibility to Him. If we should have derived our existence, and be able to maintain it, without God, then He would have no legal right over us, and His laws would not be justly binding on us. Thus it is evident that to deny creation is nothing less than to destroy the foundation upon which not only the true religion, but all religion and morality rest.

No less important is the fact that all creatures to their being

created by God, owe the inestimable benefit of being the objects of His love and care, Ps. 145:9. God loves His handiwork, John 3:16; He looked down upon it with favor, Gen. 1:31, it was the execution of His perfect plan, a work in which He had revealed Himself, in which He had laid divine thoughts; He loves it for His own sake. And in this love all creatures partake. It is for this reason that there is even a love of God to sinners, for, in so far as they are creatures of God, in so far are they objects of His love; and God shows this love abundantly, not only in the benefits of common grace, but also in what He does to the sinner through the Gospel, earnestly seeking his salvation, Matt. 23:27; Ezek. 33:11.

Ps. 145:9, Jehovah is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works.

Gen. 1:31, And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

Matt. 23:37, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Ezek. 33:11, Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

123. **The Origin of the World according to Evolutionism.**—It is no wonder therefore that unbelief has ever worked with might and main against this doctrine of creation. In our day it tries to substitute for it the theory of evolution, according to which the universe under the guidance of purely natural and mechanical factors has evolved during millions of years from some primal eternal principle, which principle is left unexplained. Among these factors are mentioned especially these four: a) accidental advantages acquired by individuals of a species by birth; b) advantages acquired by adaptation; c) maintenance of these advantages through transmission by inheritance; d) survival of the fittest through the succumbing of the weak and backward specimens in the struggle for existence which was necessitated by scarcity of food. This theory of unbelief had evidently already reached its height. Especially in Germany there are many unbelieving learned men who reject the theory as untenable. Zealous search has been made for the "missing link" between man and beast, but with poor success.

124. **Implications of this Theory.**—It has already been noticed that this theory, as a theory which denies creation, takes away the foundation of all religion and morality. But even for civil and social life, for social freedom and safety, the thorough going maintenance of its principles would be most pernicious. For, if it was formerly necessary for the development of the world that the weak

should succumb, then that is the case still; then the progress and welfare of the world still demand that the weak perish and the strong triumph. Instead of right might must rule. The strong need no longer trouble himself with the question of right, but is doing the world a service if he oppresses and crushes the weak. A more pernicious theory against social righteousness and the welfare of society is hardly thinkable. It would take us back to the barbarous conditions of "the right of the strongest," the right of the "club-law."

Especially would the Church of Christ have to await fearful times if ever that principle gained full sway and was carried out consistently. Unbelief has always considered the Church a hindrance to the well-being of the world. The removal of this hindrance would therefore be deemed one of the first duties to be performed, and a terrible persecution would be the result.

It is dreadful that almost all schools seek to instill this theory into the youth. This alone is a sufficient incentive to bring cheerfully exacting sacrifices for the cause of Christian Instruction.

125. **Modified Theory of Evolution.**—It is to be noticed that there is an evolutionistic theory which may not be called a theory of unbelief. It maintains that the six days of creation must be interpreted as meaning six long perods of time, during which under the guidance of the Creator the work of each day was accomplished by gradual development. It is an attempt to harmonize Scripture with the assertions of the natural sciences in regard to the antiquity of the earth.

There are, however, objections to be brought against regarding the days of creation as six long periods of time. Gen. 1 leads us to think that after the fourth day the days were ruled by the sun, so that it is difficult to regard the last three days as periods of a long duration. But then it is difficult also to regard the first three days as periods, since these first days are spoken of in the same manner as the last three. Just as it says: "And there was evening and there was morning, one day, . . . a second day, . . . a third day," so it says: "And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day, ... a fifth day, ... the sixth day." Similarly in the fourth Commandment, Exod. 20:11, the same word is used for the "days" upon which God worked, and the "day" on which He rested, and the "days" upon which we are commanded to work or to rest. To attach a different meaning to a word occurring more than once in the same sentence is not admissible, unless for obvious reasons.

These objections are quite sufficient over against the weak position of science. The so-called results of scientific investigation deserve little credit. It is well known that "science" can scarcely

hide its joy when it thinks to have found something to the discredit of the Scriptures. Then especially "science" is inconceivably credulous, witness its assertions in regard to the cap of a skull which was found in 1891 on the island of Java, a find which was heralded as that of the "missing link," the ape-man, called the Pithecanthropus Erectus. No wonder that the "established results" of such a "science" have proved themselves very uncertain, and that repeatedly generally accepted theories have after a while been discarded. Such facts advise carefulness. Our interpretation of Scripture is not infallible, that of the first chapter of Genesis not excepted. But it is not advisable to change the old interpretation of that chapter without good reasons, and such good reasons have not yet presented themselves.

c. Providence

126. **Definition of Providence.**—Providence is the all-powerful act of God whereby he sustains and governs all things. It is called "an all-powerful act," for the preservation of creation requires omnipotence no less than creation itself does. Through creation things did not become self-existent, so that they could continue to exist independent of God, but have an existence dependent on their Creator. They must therefore be sustained from moment to moment by the same omnipotence which called them into being. Otherwise they would immediately vanish into nothing.

Providence includes three activities of God, viz. preservation, concurrence, and government. Preservation concerns the existence, concurrence, the activity, and government, the purpose of all things.

Preservation is that act of omnipotence whereby God sustains all things in such a manner and for such a time as is pleasing to Him, Hebrew 1:3.

Concurrence is that act of omnipotence whereby God co-operates in all the movements and activities of His creatures, i. e. influences them in such a way that they act in harmony with His will, Gen. 50:20, without setting aside in any way the fact "that the creatures appear in, under, and through God as secondary causes, which is true especially of human beings, who have been created as rational beings and as such are ever viewed and treated by God" (Bavinck).

Government is that act of omnipotence whereby God directs everything according to His will and to His purposes, Ps. 97:1.

Hebr. 1:3, And upholding all things by the word of his power.

Gen. 50:20, And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Ps. 97:1, Jehovah reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad.

127. **Concurrence and Man's Responsibility.**—Concurrence seems to be incompatible with the responsibility of man. If God, to execute His counsel, exerts such an influence on the individual then the latter does not act freely, the deed is not actually his deed, not a deed for which he can be held responsible.

We cannot give a satisfactory answer to this difficulty. The solution lies in the wonderful, and for us incomprehensible manner in which God can exert influence upon us so that the freedom of our acts is in no way taken away and that the acts do nevertheless answer to His purpose.

Attempts have been made to throw light upon this problem by means of illustrations, for instance, of a writer who makes use of a poor pen and for that reason writes poorly, of a good musician with a poor instrument; of a vessel driven by the winds which fill its sails, but steered by the rudder; of two horses drawing a wagon. But such illustrations are of no value, since the analogies do not hold. The individual does not appear here as a mere instrument. and God does not write poorly. Neither is concurrence merely the wind that fills the sails, but it concerns the rudder as well; it consists not merely in giving ability and strength, but concerns the use made of them also.

128. **Extent of Providence.**—That God's Providence concerns all things, even the smallest, is taught by the Lord in Matt. 10:29, 30. To limit it to the more important things is not honoring God by deeming Him too exalted to concern Himself with trifles, but it is dishonoring him by ascribing to the small things an existence independent of God, and by virtually denying His infiniteness, which excludes all limits. And how often are little things the cause of most important events.

129. **Pantheism and Deism.**—There are two systems, that of Pantheism on the one hand and that of Deism on the other, which are both at variance with the Doctrine of Providence.

The doctrine of Providence proceeds from the acknowledgment of a God who is exalted high above this world and exists without it (His transcendance), but who is also present in this world (His immanence), and who as such a God sustains and governs it by His all-mighty power, which is not to be separated from His Essence.

Pantheism, however, denies the transcendence of God, and in fact also His immanence, for it teaches that God is one with creation, that God does not exist outside of the world, but that the world belongs to His Being. In this way all responsibility of man disappears, even the possibility of sin disappears, for then every deed of man is a deed of God Himself. It is remarkable that, not-

withstanding the wickedness of this teaching, Mysticism has ever shown itself akin to this Pantheism. Even in the false mysticism within our own circles (Cf. §§ 34, 35) we find evidences of that fact. When admonished to fulfill some duty, the answer of these people will be: "The Lord must bring me to it," showing therewith that they consider God the only agent, and responsible, if they neglect such a duty.

Deism, on the contrary, denies the immanence of God, and interprets His transcendence as of the sort which excludes all concern with the world and its history. According to this theory, it would be a proof of the imperfection of this world, and therefore of the imperfection of God's handiwork, if it stood in need of constant management of God and of His sustaining power. The Deist claims that the perfection of creation requires that it can continue in existence independent of the sustaining power of God, and can proceed in its history and reach its purpose without God's government. Deism therefore denies Providence and robs us of its comfort.

130. **The Comfort of Providence.**—The comfort of Providence consists for the believer in this, that with all his needs and his interests he is ever in the hands of his heavenly Father, and that, no matter what may threaten, he is safe in these hands; or, as the Catechism so beautifully says: "that all things come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand." (Qu. 27); and that this should serve us to be "patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and to place in all things which hereafter may befall us, our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move" (Qu. 28).

SECOND DIVISION

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

1. Man in the State of Integrity

131. **Man Created Good and in God's Image.**—God created man good, and in His image. "Good" and "in His image" do not mean the same. That man was created good signifies that he was created without any deficiency, fully equipped to answer to his purpose. That he was created in God's image signifies: created so as to resemble God, as much as that is possible. God, so to speak, used Himself as a model, after which in creation He patterned man, so that in man he brought forth an image of Himself, a being who reflected His communicable attributes. From this it is evident what a glorious creature man, as he came from the hands of His Creator, must have been.

132. **The Image of God.**—The image of God may therefore be said to be the complex of all that in which man resembled God. In Scripture three characteristics are expressly mentioned as belonging to the image of God, viz., knowledge of God, Col. 3:10, righteousness and holiness, Eph. 4:24. It is evident, however, that there was more in man in which he resembled God. For that reason the distinction is made between the image of God in a narrower sense and the image of God in a wider sense. According to this distinction the three characteristics named in Scripture constitute the image of God in the narrower sense, while the image of God in the wider sense is considered to consist in all that in which it further manifests itself in man's intellectual and moral nature as endowed with reason, will, and feeling, and in his destination to have dominion over the works of God's hands. This latter element, that of dominion, is by no means to be excluded, as some have done, for in Gen. 1:26 this dominion is prominently brought forward in connection with man's creation in the image of God. Likewise in Ps. 8:5, 6 this dominion is pointed out as evidence of the glory given to man, and from Rev. 5:10 we learn that in heaven, too, the redeemed shall be kings and priests. To be created in the image of God is in Scripture nowhere said of the angels, who are "ministering spirits," but it is said of man, who was to have dominion.

In regard to Col. 3:10 and Eph. 4:24 the objection might be

made that these passages do not refer to the image of God in Adam, but to the restored image of God in the believers. This difference, however, does not affect the image itself. That which is restored by grace is essentially the same as that which was lost by sin.

"The likeness of man to God respected: 1st. The kind of his nature; man was created like God a free, rational, personal Spirit; 2nd. He was created like God as to the perfection of his nature; in knowledge, and righteousness and true holiness; 3rd. In his dominion over nature" (Hodge).

Between "image" and "likeness" different distinctions have been made. The Roman Catholics, for instance, teach that the image pertains to the nature, and likeness to the virtues (moral perfections); whence it follows that Adam by sinning lost not the image, but the likeness of God. Reformed Theologians, on the contrary, generally considered the two words as intended to supplement and strengthen each other, and thus to express but one conception, that of: a very striking image.

> Col. 3:10, And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him.
>
> Eph. 4:24, And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.
>
> Ps. 8:5, 6, For Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels, and crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet.
>
> Rev. 5:10, And madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.

133. **Man in the State of Integrity.**—Man as created in God's image was not yet what he was destined to become. Not only was there to be development, but the higher state of eternal life which waits the believers, would also have been attained in the way of the Covenant of Works. Moreover, man was fully capable to fulfill the law of God which was written in his heart, i. e. capable not to sin, but also capable to sin. This capability to sin was to become in the way of obedience an incapability to sin; instead, through his disobedience, it became an incapabality not to sin.

134. **Pelagian View of Man in the State of Integrity.**—Pelagians taught and teach that man was created in a state of innocence, not evil nor positively good, for according to them positive goodness can not be innate but must be acquired by doing good. It is evident, however, that man in a state between good and evil, as near to evil as to good, could not have been "very good," Gen. 1:31, in the eyes of God; still less would he have been the image and likeness of God, which in the state of integrity could only mean the perfect image and likeness of God.

135. **Man's Task in Paradise.**—Man was destined to be king and priest on the earth as his domain. As king he was to have dominion over and to "subdue," Gen. 1:28, the earth. And as priest he was to dedicate the treasures of the earth to God. These treasures were given to the earth "for the service of mankind, to the end that man might serve his God" (Confession, Art. 12). The earth, therefore, was to bring these treasures to him as its offerings to its king, and he was to dedicate them to God as his continual thank-offering to his God, in order that God might be glorified in His works. In addition to this he was "to dress the garden of Eden and to keep (to save) it," Gen. 2:15. This "to keep it" may refer to the danger of deterioration which would ensue when it was not dressed, because it was designed to have man's care, to be kept in order and even to develop by man's cultivation, but it sounds also as a warning against the danger of an evil power, desirous to invade and to destroy it.

136. **Man composed of Body and Soul.**—It has been maintained that man consists of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. The spirit is then considered to be the higher, and the soul the lower invisible part of man; the spirit as the part through which man is related to God, through which he can have communion with God, and the soul as the perceiving, feeling, desiring part, which forms the connecting link between spirit and body. This is called Trichotomy, and its supporters appeal to the fact that in the Scriptures mention is made now of "soul" and then of "spirit," and that in 1 Thess. 5:23 the spirit and the soul are expressly named as with the body the three composing parts of man.

These arguments, however, do not hold. The use of "spirit" and "soul" in different texts can not be taken as denoting different parts of man, for these words are used interchangeably. A plain instance of this is found by comparing Luke 23:46 with Acts 2:27. In the former passage we read that the Savior commanded His spirit into the hands of the Father, and in the latter that in the grave His soul had not been left by God. And 1 Thess. 5:23 is to be explained in connection with the fact that in consequence of the platonic philosophy, which taught trichotomy, it had become common parlance among the Greeks to use the expression "spirit, soul, and body" to denote the entire man. In order to make it plain that he meant the entire man, Paul could do no better than to use that expression.

Scripture teaches that man is composed of two parts: soul or spirit and body (Dichotomy). In the account of creation it is clearly pointed out that the creation of man consisted in the creation of a body, formed of the dust of the ground, and of a soul which was "breathed" into that body, and so "man became a living

soul," Gen. 2:7. Likewise in regard to man's death mention is made only of the body, "the dust" which "returneth to the earth as it was, and of the soul, "the spirit" which "returneth unto God who gave it," Eccl. 12:7.

137. **Theories Regarding the Origin of the Soul.**—There are three theories to account for the origin of the soul: Preëxistentism, Creatianism, and Traducianism. The Preëxistentists taught that the souls were all brought forth at once in the beginning, and that in the course of time one after the other receives a body. The souls therefore had a pre-existence; they existed before man came into being. The Traducianists hold that the soul as well as the body is propagated by the parents. And the Creationists believe that the soul is separately created by God in the body when it is being brought into existence.

Preëxistentism is a theory of pagan philosophy; Christians have concerned themselves but little with it. The other two move within the sphere of Christian thought. Lutherans generally favor Traducianism, thinking that thereby they can better explain original sin. The Reformed and also the Roman Catholics are as a rule Creationists. It is this theory which finds most support in Scripture, **Eccl. 12:7; Zach. 12:1; Hebr. 12:9.**

> Eccl. 12:7, And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.
>
> Zach. 12:1, Thus saith Jehovah, who stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.
>
> Hebr. 12:9, Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Against the traducian argument, that Traducianism is in harmony, and Creationism in conflict with the doctrine of original sin, as it cannot be possible for God to create a polluted soul, it has been remarked: a) that it is not contrary to the holiness of God to withhold from the soul He created His image, with the result that to such a soul sin has a free access from its very beginning; b) that as an explanation of original sin Traducianism implies that sin is something material, and that it makes it impossible to maintain the holiness of Christ's human nature as being born from a woman; c) that Traducianism is also in conflict with the nature of the soul as an indivisible unity.

138. **Unity of the Human Race.**—By creating Eve out of Adam, and the two as a pair that was to be fruitful and to multiply, the Lord created in Adam a race that was to be an organic unity, all mankind, Eve included, having its origin in him. This unity of

the human race with Adam as its progenitor is a very important fact, because of its bearing on the truths of our misery through Adam and our redemption through Christ. Therein lies the ground for what is said in Romans 5:18: So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life.

This unity of the human race is clearly stated in Scripture, Acts 17:26; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22. In refutation of its denial by unbelievers it has been pointed out: a) that comparative philology has discovered relation and unity of origin in languages where formerly they were not even surmised to exist; b) that among all peoples traces are found of the same traditions, as of a golden age, a terrible flood, and also of the same customs; c) that among all races there is conformity of the shape of the skull, number and length of teeth, average weight of the brains, average number of pulsations, average life-time, period of pregnancy, temperature of the body; d) that intermarriages of all races and their offspring are fruitful, while union of different species of animals in many, and of the products thereof in all cases, are barren.

2. The Covenant of Works

139. **God's Covenantal Way of Dealing with Man.**—From the beginning God has had a special way of dealing with man. The irrational creatures He rules through His Concurrence (Cf. §126); the angels, His ministering spirits, He rules as far as we know by authority and commands; over man, however, He ever exercised His authority in a covenantal way, by making covenants with him. Covenants in which His will was put before man, with promises of life if he should, and threatenings of death if he should not do that will of God, thus leaving the decision to him. For that reason our Reformed Theologians have of old spoken of "God's special covenantal ruling concerning man."

This covenantal way of dealing with man has its ground in man's being created in the image of God (Cf. Dr. Kuyper, Gemeene Gratie, I, p. 161). As such, man was made a person enjoying a freedom as was given to no other creature, even a relative independence and a right to self-determination, though of course under responsibility to God. Man was such a creature because it had pleased God to make him so, and having made him so, God dealt with him accordingly. Now to enter into a covenant with him, to make him a party in a covenant with God Himself, and to promise him eternal life upon the fulfillment of a condition, instead of simply giving it him, thus putting him in a position to gain eternal life by his work, by effort on his part — that is to deal with

him in accordance with what He Himself had made him—a free moral agent. "Unless there is a certain independence between the parties, there can be no covenant."

This covenant way of dealing with man shows itself in all the conditional promises with which Scripture abounds, but especially in the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. And it dates from the beginning, as the Covenant of Works was made already in Paradise. This Covenant is to be considered here.

140. **Definition of the Covenant of Works.**—The Covenant of Works was the solemn compact of God made with Adam as representing the whole human race, whereby God promised to him eternal life on condition of obedience, and threatened him with eternal death in case of disobedience.

141. **Purpose and Benefit of this Covenant.**—The purpose of the Covenant of Works was to open for man the way to gain eternal life. Man in Paradise had not reached his real destination. He was still "of the earth, earthy," and his real destination was "to bear the image of the Heavenly," of the last Adam, Christ, the image of Him who is "of heaven," 1 Cor. 15:47, 48, to be conformed to the image of the Son, Rom. 8:29. With this heavenly glory the Lord God wished to bless him. Not, however, simply through granting it to him, through making him a partaker in it without striving after it on his part, but through giving him an opportunity of gaining it. The reaching of his destiny was thus "placed in his own choice, and made dependent on his own free will" (Bavinck).

This Covenant was therefore an excellent gift of divine favor. Without the Covenant the very same obedience would have been incumbant on him as a matter of duty towards his Creator, and without any prospect of reward. Doing one's duty can never be meritorious, Luk. 17:10, but through this Covenant it was to be rewarded with eternal life, not as a reward of merit, but as the reward of a free gift of divine goodness.

> 1 Cor. 15:47, 48, The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.
>
> Rom. 8:29, For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.
>
> Luke 17:10, Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.

142. **The Covenant of Works and the Law.**—The obedience demanded in the Covenant of Works was the obedience to the divine law as it was written in man's heart. This law was in the

first instance intended to be to man his rule for a life of thankfulness to the glory of God. Through the Covenant of Works, however, this law obtained a second purpose, that of being for man the way to gain eternal life. In this connection it may be observed that this twofold meaning of the law still holds. It explains how believers can be said to be under the law, 1 Cor. 9:21, and not under the law, Rom. 6:14; Gal. 3:13, at the same time. They are not under the law as the way to eternal life, as in that sense Christ fulfilled it for them; but as the rule for a life of thankfulness they are still under the law. Ignorance on this point has led the Antinomians to the error, that Christ's fulfilling of the law brought about the setting aside of the law in all respects. This, however, is impossible. In its original meaning the law is eternal, since it is the expression of the unchangeable will of God.

Rom. 6:14b, For ye are not under law, but under grace.
1 Cor. 9:21b, Not being without law to God, but under law to Christ.

143. **This Covenant "Onesided."**—The Covenant of Works, like every other Covenant of God made with men, was a "onesided" (monopleuric) Covenant. This is to say, it proceeded from God only; man had no part in the transaction. It was not made by God and Adam together, but by God alone. For Adam there was nothing to do but to accept it gratefully as God had made it. And he had abundant reasons to do so.

The contention that such a onesided covenant cannot be a real covenant, is unfounded. The essential part of a covenant is not that both have an equal part in stipulating the terms, that demands and promises are made mutually, but that there is a solemn binding of one another. Such we have here.

144. **The Confessional Standards and the Covenant of Works.**—Our Confessional Standards do not speak of the Covenant of Works. The reason is that they came into existence and were adopted by the Church before the doctrine of the Covenants had reached its later development and clearness. It may be true that the covenant-idea is traceable in what they contain concerning our participation in Adam's sin, but what they explicitly state is that we are counted guilty in Adam because he was the father of the whole human race, and that original sin perpetuates itself through "the propagation of a vicious nature" (Canons of Dort, III & IV, 2; Catechism, Qu. 7).

145. **Scriptural Grounds for the Doctrine of this Covenant.**—In the account given in Genesis of the fall of man no express mention is made of a Covenant of God with man, but Scripture does

plainly speak of it in other places. Thus in Hos. 6:7 it is said of Adam that he was a transgressor of the Covenant, and in Rom. 5:12-21 Christ is presented as covenant-head, and as such placed over against Adam, which implies that Adam, too, was a covenant-head.

> Hos. 6:7, But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant; there have they dealt treacherously against Me.
>
> Rom. 5:18, 19, So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.

146. **Importance of this Doctrine.**—That the doctrine of the Covenant of Works has great significance for the Reformed teaching concerning salvation, is evident from the fact that it casts a clear light upon matters that would otherwise be less plain or even inexplicable to us. Such matters are:

a) The Covenant of Works explains the fact that perfect obedience entitles to eternal life. This, indeed, is not something self-evident. With the most irreproachable obedience man would not have been able to do any more than he was obliged to do, and would, therefore, have no right to lay claim to a reward, Luke 17:7-10, much less a reward as eternal life. Eternal life can never truly be earned, not even in a state of integrity. The connection between obedience and eternal life, which is still existing, Matt. 19:17b, was therefore not an original one, but must have been established by a special divine act. This special act of God we find in the Covenant of Works, with its promise that obedience would be rewarded with eternal life.

b) The Covenant of Works explains the imputation of Adam's sin to all his descendants, as if they all personally had eaten of the fruit of the tree (the guilt of sin, Cf. §159). This cannot have its ground in our relation to Adam as our ancestor alone, for that would be contrary to the divine rule, that the son shall not bear the unrighteousness of the father, Ezek. 18:20. Adam's sinning as our ancestor may offer an explanation for our natural depravity as inherited from him (the pollution of sin, Cf. §162), but it offers no explanation for the imputation of his guilt on us. The imputation of Adam's sin as our own sin is possible only through the fact that Adam as our ancestor was at the same time our representative Covenant-head, acting in our place and on our behalf, and this covenant relation to Adam as our representing head was established by the Covenant of Works.

c) The Covenant of Works also throws light on the redeeming work of Christ as a work that was closely connected with that Covenant. It explains: 1) the necessity of the active obedience

of Christ (Cf. §444), for it was the Covenant of Works that required such an obedience as the condition to eternal life; 2) the necessity of the passive obedience of Christ (Cf. §444), of His suffering and death, for it was the Covenant of Works that required our death as the penalty for our sin. So it was that by the work of Christ "the ordinance (or requirement) of the law (i. e. its requirements as the law of the Covenant of Works) was fulfilled, Rom. 8:4;—and 3) how the active obedience of Christ could bring salvation to us. For even the obedience of Christ would not have earned eternal life without the promise of the Covenant of Works, by which that life was made the reward of obedience. It was therefore in virtue of that promise, which was also valid in regard to the obedience of Christ, and consequently in virtue of the Covenant of Works, that by His obedience Christ could become for us the Author of eternal salvation.

The Covenant of Works must therefore not be regarded as invalidated and abolished because of the fall of man. It still stands, and its requirements were fully maintained in the meditorial work of Christ, and will be maintained forever. Those who through Christ have fulfilled its demands shall inherit its promise of eternal life, and for those who reject Christ through unbelief it continues to be a stern creditor, inexorably demanding perfect obedience or death, and they shall perish under its curse.

147. **The Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.**— Since both were Covenants made by God with man, and since both belong to the special way, the covenant way, of God's dealing with man, we may expect points of similarity as well as points of difference between the two. To pay attention to these points will help us to obtain a clear conception of both Covenants.

Points of similarity are:

a) The Covenant of Works was to be the way for man to obtain eternal life, to lead him to salvation in a manner which was in harmony with his nature as a person, created in the image of God. This also is the purpose of the Covenant of Grace, since even after the fall it pleased God to continue His dealing with man as having been created in His image, and therefore to bring His elect to eternal life in a covenant way.

b) The Covenant of Works did not positively guarantee salvation to Adam. It was possible for him to break this Covenant, and then death would follow. Similarly in the Covenant of Grace. To be a member of the Covenant of Grace does not mean that now our salvation is certain since there is a possibility of breaking it, and therefore a possibility of not entering into eternal life, but of being cast into outer darkness.

c) As long as he did not break the Covenant, however, Adam could not die or be lost. Similarly one who is a member of the Covenant of Grace can perish only through breaking the Covenant. This is the basis for the Reformed doctrine of the salvation of Covenant-children who die in infancy (Cf. §255, 3b).

Points of difference are:

a) First the important difference that, while in the Covenant of Works eternal life was to be obtained through work, in the Covenant of Grace it is granted as a free gift. In the Covenant of Works the righteousness that was demanded by that Covenant, was to be obtained through work; in the Covenant of Grace it is to be obtained by faith.

b) Another very significant point of difference is that, while the Covenant of Works was made with a representative Covenant-head, who decided for all, in the Covenant of Grace the accepting or breaking of the Covenant is a personal matter. The Covenant of Grace has not a representative Covenant-head such as the Covenant of Works had (Cf. §236, 3a).

3. Man's Probation and Fall

148. **The Probationary Command.**—The probationary command, as its name indicates, was a special command to test man's obedience. We find it in Gen. 2:16, 17: "And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

149. **Necessity of this Command.**—The probationary command was not something arbitrary or unnecessary, but necessary because of the Covenant of Works. By that Covenant the way was opened of gaining eternal life through obedience. To gain that prize it was necessary that man have the opportunity to show true, pure obedience. And it was the purpose of the probationary command to give him this opportunity.

For man, created in the image of God, could not do what was necessary to gain eternal life through simply fulfilling the commands of God by virtue of a holy nature, as something that was natural to him, the alternative of disobedience being unknown to him; but he was to obey God from a definite choice, willing nothing else. To show such an obedience it was necessary that man be given an opportunity, even a tempting opportunity, to be disobedient, and this opportunity was given him in the probationary command.

150. **Adequacy of the Probationary Command.**—The probationary command was admirably adapted for its purpose to give man the opportunity to show himself obedient in the full sense of the word, i. e. obedient from the free deliberate choice to be obedient, obedient for obedience's sake. It was adapted to this purpose:

a) Because it was of an arbitrary nature. It would seem that the divine law, which was written in his heart, gave man sufficient opportunity to disobey, and thus, by not disobeying, show obedience. But this was not the case. That law was in perfect harmony with his nature, and his nature was in perfect harmony with that law. In it he moved as in his element. Consequently to do something contrary to that law, was for him to do something contrary to his own nature, something as impossible for him as it is for a good tree to bring forth evil fruit. To make disobedience possible, to put man to a real test, the command had to be, therefore, of an arbitrary nature. It had to be a command concerning something that in itself was not morally wrong. Such a command was the probationary command. In itself eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil conflicted with man's holy nature no more than eating of any other tree.

b) Because it was of a tempting nature. There was a tempting element already in its arbitrariness. It always facilitates obedience to a command when it is evident that there are good reasons for giving it. But when it seems that such good reasons are lacking, so that the command impresses us as having for its purpose only to make us submit to authority, then we feel an inclination not to obey it.

And an even stronger element of temptation lay in the fact that the probationary command seemed contrary to man's interests. It was a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This name was very significant. To have the knowledge of good and evil means to have reached the state of majority, Heb. 5:14. A minor, because he lacks the knowledge of good and evil, and cannot sufficiently discern between the two, needs to be under guardianship, but he who has obtained the knowledge of good and evil can have freedom to go his own way. In civil life it is called the state of being "of age;" a person is then permitted to manage his own affairs. The command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil indicated that man was still a minor, with the natural desire to come to majority. By that tree, the fruit of which promised to give the knowledge of good and evil, majority was placed within his reach, but now the probationary command forbade him to eat of its desirable fruit. Satan quickly pointed out these things to man, ascribing the command to the intention on the part of God to keep him a minor, Gen. 3:5.

The test was severe, but the severer the test, the purer would be the obedience shown, as an obedience for obedience's sake. Such an obedience the glorious prize demanded. Such an obedience the Savior has "learned" in Gethsemane, Hebr. 5:8.

> Hebr. 5:14, But solid food is for the fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.
> Gen. 3:5, For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.
> Hebr. 5:8, Though He was the Son, yet has learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Thus we see how in every respect the probationary command was worthy of God, and how the world shows that it does not understand the things which are of the Spirit of God when it mocks them.

151. **Beneficial Purpose of the Probationary Command.**—Far from being contrary to man's interests, the probationary command was given for his benefit. Its purpose was not to withhold from him something good, much less to serve as a stumbling block in his way, that he should fall, but to place him in a position to show an obedience such as was demanded by the Covenant of Works, and thus to gain the prize of eternal life. At the same time it would be the way to come to a true majority, and to this state the Lord would bring him in the way of such an obedience. For the way of obedience as a minor child, the obedience of implicit trust in the Father, is always the way to the majority of the son. Man. however, chose the false majority of the lie, which promised to bring it to him in the way of disobedience, and such a majority he is acknowledged after the fall to have gained, Gen. 3:22a.

> Gen. 3:22a, And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.

152. **The Temptation of Satan.**—The temptation of Satan was evidently aimed to bring man to that step by which, through a deed of intentional disobedience, he should throw off the tutelage of God, and bring himself to maturity. First he seeks to rouse doubt in the minds of Adam and Eve concerning the truth and the worthiness of the command. Then he seeks to intensify this doubt to unbelief and distrust through boldly denying that eating of the fruit of the tree would result in death, and by assuring them that the fruit shall bring them to majority, so that, without being subjected to guardianship, they would themselves be able to decide concerning good and evil. And finally, after he has them sufficiently in his power for that purpose, he casts an alluring spell over their senses, so that the beauty of the fruit and its

desirability to make wise captivate their eyes. Full of guile he turns first to the woman in order that, having won her over, he may use her to seduce the man, with whom as Covenant-head he is chiefly concerned.

153. **Necessity of this Temptation.**—The temptation by Satan was a necessary element in the test. Man's obedience would not have been perfect without having endured temptation. Nor was the permitting of the temptation an injustice to Adam, for by being created in the image of God, he was fully equipped to withstand it. Though still a minor, man was not mentally deficient, but endowed with wonderful knowledge and insight. His naming the animals proves that.

That he was seduced can therefore not serve man for an excuse. In spite of the temptation the deed of disobedience was none the less his deed for which he was responsible. His taking the fruit because of Satan's deception makes the wilfulness of his deed the more apparent. It shows that he took the fruit with the deliberate intention to be disobedient, in order that by this disobedience he might free himself from God, and might gain what according to Satan was to be gained, to be like God.

154. **The Execution of the Threat.**—The threat of the Covenant was executed immediately, but not to its full extent, for if this had happened, Adam and Eve would immediately have become like the devils in wickedness and depravity and have sunk into eternal death. Now, however, although man was a child of death as soon as he had sinned, he did not immediately become the prey of death to the full extent. Instead the Lord showed in His sentence that He had not abandoned man, even though man had abandoned Him. Man was to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, and womankind was to bring forth children in pain, but justice was mingled with grace; there would be propagation of the human race and bread for sustaining life. This was grace that concerned all mankind—common grace, therefore.

155. **The "Mother-Promise."**—The judgment was even accompanied by an announcement of saving grace, for the sentence pronounced on Satan was an Evangel for man, Gen. 3:15. Man had chosen the side of Satan, and thereby fallen into eternal death. But God shall be merciful to man, shall cause enmity to arise between him and Satan, shall make him in Christ a victor over Satan, and thus save him.

> Gen. 3:15, And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.

This promise is rightly called the "mother-promise." It contains the first promise of salvation, which would hereafter be ever more clearly revealed. In this promise we can detect the characteristics of the Covenant of Grace, which later, in the days of Abraham, came to full development. In fact here the Lord binds Himself to the woman and her seed to be a God to them, and to cause salvation to come to them as a gift of grace, so that in this promise the parties, the benefits, the participation in these benefits, and the gracious, one-sided, and unconditional character of the Covenant of Grace can be seen.

It is worthy of note that the race which is to be saved is immediately severed from its relation with Adam. The Lord will be merciful to it as the seed of the woman. And if the sentence of Eve, as the seducer of the man, is more severe than that of Adam, Eve is the first to be explicitly received in the Covenant of Grace.

4. Sin

156. **Significance of Adam's Sin for his Descendants.**—Through Adam's disobedience to the probationary command sin entered into the world, and death through sin. For this disobedience did not only concern himself but it concerned us also, and that for two reasons. In the first place because he was our progenitor, whose corruption, which was the result of his fall, could not but be transmitted to his descendants, Gen. 5:3; John 3:6. In the second place because he was our Covenant-head, the person who in the Covenant of Works represented all mankind, Rom. 5:12ff.

The sin which through Adam entered into the world is original sin and actual sin, and to original sin belong original guilt and original pollution.

> Gen. 5:3, And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.
>
> John 3:6, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
>
> Rom. 5:12, Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.

157. **Original Sin.**—Original sin is Adam's sin of disobedience to the probationary command imputed to us as our own sin. Since Adam was in the Covenant of Works the representative of the whole human race, all his descendants share in his deed of Covenant breaking. In him they all have taken the forbidden fruit. It is the sin in which we are born, Ps. 51:5, the sin which cleaves to us from the very beginning of our existence, and on account of which all the world is condemnable before God, even infants not excepted.

Proofs for this doctrine are the plain teachings of Scripture, Rom. 5:12-19, the character of the Covenant of Works, and the fact that even infants are subject to death. Since death is "the wages of sin," Rom. 6:23, and infants cannot be subject to death on account of actual sin committed by them, it must be on account of original sin, of the sin of Adam imputed to them.

158. **Original Guilt.**—Original guilt is the state of being guilty and subject to punishment which is ours through the disobedience of Adam. As the commands of God are absolutely binding, every disobedience to them makes guilty before God and subject to punishment. Since we share in Adam's disobedience, we share also in the guilt and subjection to punishment in which it involves.

A very explicit statement of Scripture in regard to original guilt is Rom. 5:12. As in that passage the Apostle speaks of our relation to Adam, the "one man" through whom sin entered into the world, it is plain that the last words: "for that all sinned" mean: for that all sinned in him, and thereby incurred sin and death upon ourselves. In 1 Cor. 15:22 it is said that "in Adam all die." To this, as has been stated above, even infants are not excepted.

159. **Original Pollution.**—Original pollution is the condition of inherent corruption of our entire nature, which is ours from the very beginning of our existence. Sin affects first of all our state, our relation to the divine law, and in the second place it affects our condition. In regard to our state it makes us guilty and subject to punishment, and in regard to our condition it makes us polluted, corrupt. As we share in Adam's sin, we share also in its pollution.

To this pollution belongs "all defilement of flesh and of spirit," all sinful lusts of the flesh, all that is wrong in our character, all selfishness, covetousness, untruthfulness, pride, etc. It is, as well as original guilt, ours directly from Adam, but in so far as it is propagated from generation to generation, it can be said that we inherit it from our parents.

160. **Actual Sin.**—Actual sin is the sin which we ourselves commit. It is the evil fruit of original pollution through which man became an evil tree, a being that is "wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness." We commit actual sin by omission, by not doing that which the Lord has commanded, and by commission, by doing that which He has forbidden, and that by evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds.

Evil thoughts can arise from our own hearts, Matt. 15:19, but they can also be stirred up by Satan. In the first case they are of course our own sins; in the second case they become our sins as soon as we give them a place in our thoughts and permit our

mind to busy itself with them. An evil thought becomes a greater sin if we permit it to be revealed in our speech, and it becomes a still greater sin if we give execution to the thought in deeds.

> Matt. 15:19, For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings; these are the things which defile the man.

161. **This Imputation Immediate.**—The imputation of Adam's sin to us as our own sin has been regarded by some as mediate, by others as immediate. By mediate imputation is meant that Adam's sin comes to us through the medium of our parents and ancestors, as so many links in the chain binding us to Adam; by immediate imputation is meant that Adam's sin comes to us directly from Adam himself. If Adam were only our progenitor the first theory would be correct; but he was also our covenant-head, and from our covenant relation to Adam it follows that the second view must be accepted. Immediate imputation is the teaching of Scripture in Romans 5:12 and 1 Cor. 15:22, and also in Rom. 11:32 and Gal. 3:22, where it is said that God "hath shut up all under sin."

162. **This Imputation not Unjust.**—There is no right for the objection that such an immediate imputation of Adam's sin would be unjust. It is in full accordance with the principle of representation, which is also in human affairs commonly accepted as a legal principle. In many cases no action can be taken save through a representative person who acts for us all. And then it is always understood as a matter of course that his acts as our representative are our acts, that we are held responsible for such acts and the results thereof.

Still less do we have reason to complain of the imputation of Adam's sin since it has pleased God to open for us a way of salvation based on the same principle, a way through which it is possible for us to become partakers of the perfect righteousness of Christ, to which we have contributed nothing at all, and which nevertheless by imputation can become ours "so perfectly, as if we had satisfied in our own person for all our sins, and fulfilled all righteousness."

163. **Mutual Relation between Guilt and Pollution.**—Original guilt and pollution are related to one another as cause and effect, original guilt being the cause of original pollution. For since from the beginning of our existence the sin of Adam is imputed to us, so that we are born as transgressors of the Covenant, we could not be born otherwise than in a corrupt condition. Because Adam's sin is imputed to us, our creation can not be a creation in the image of God in the narrower sense, and the result is that

we are born in a condition in which we are not "good" as Adam was (Cf. §131) and without any protection against sin and its deadly influences.

There is, however, another theory regarding this matter, viz. the theory that on the contrary original pollution is the cause of original guilt. For, according to this view, original guilt consists in that we are held guilty for the original pollution, which we inherit from our parents.

Concerning this theory it may be observed:

a) That its conception of original guilt is entirely different from that of the first named view. The fact that we are born in a corrupt condition is then not the result of the imputation of Adam's sin, but the natural result of being born of sinful parents. And original guilt is not that we are held guilty for Adam's sin, but that we are held guilty for our own corrupt condition.

b) That the theory is the consequence of denial of the doctrine of the Covenant of Works, and therefore also of the imputation of Adam's sin. It is evident: 1) That if no Covenant of Works was made with Adam, he cannot have been our representative Covenant-head: 2) that if Adam was not our representative Covenant-head, there can be no imputation to us of his Covenant breaking, as there would be no judicial ground for it; 3) that if there is no imputation of Adam's sin, there can be no original guilt which could be the ground for original pollution.

c) That for such an original guilt there would be no judicial ground whatever; it could not be considered otherwise than as wholly arbitrary. Our corrupt condition would then be nothing but our fate, and to hold one guilty for what is nothing but his fate would not be justice.

5. The Punishment of Sin

164. **Death the Punishment of Sin.**—The wages of sin is death, Rom. 6:23, corporal, spiritual, and eternal death.

Death is also the natural result of sin. By sin man severed himself from God, the Foutain of life, and that which is separated from God must die. The branch which is hewn from the tree cannot live. When, therefore, the Lord punishes sin with eternal death the punishment is not harder than that which is the natural result of sin. Still, there are not a few who think that such a punishment would be unduly severe and unjust!

165. **Definition of Death.**—Death is the antithesis of life. Living is not existing merely, but a condition of bliss, in which good, rooted in love and harmony, and fostered by light and righteous-

ness, reigns supreme and works prefection, glory, fulness of joy. Hence death is not annihilation of existence, but the reverse of this condition of bliss; a condition in which evil, rooted in hatred and discord, in the midst of awful darkness and wrath, works destruction, perdition, a sinking away in utter woe. Life is the result of union with God; death is the result of separation from God.

166. **Corporal Death.**—Corporal death is the ruin of the body, the result of the disruption of body and soul. By the union of these two man had become "a living soul," Gen. 2:7, and it is death for the body to be separated from the soul.

The real nature of death is to an extent to be seen in the manner in which it works in a dead body. A corpse is not without life only, but it is dead. Without life, lifeless, is a negative conception, but dead is a positive conception. There are energies working in death just as well as there are energies working in life, but while in life these energies worked for the sustenance and the upbuilding of the body, in death they work for its destruction. Quickly they reduce the beautiful body to a ghastly, unsightly object, never ceasing their ravages until they have worked a total ruin.

167. **Spiritual Death.**—Spiritual death is the natural man's condition of mitigated corruption and ruin in this life. It is the result on the one hand of sin, and on the other of divine grace; the result of sin in so far as it is death, and the result of grace in so far as it is a mitigated condition. If, after man's sin, the Lord had completely abandoned him, that which we now call spiritual death would not have been; man would then have sunk into a condition of moral corruption and extreme misery like that of Satan and his angels, i.e. into the extreme miseries of eternal death. But the Lord did not abandon him, and His grace immediately exerted a restraining influence upon sin, checking it in its course to its final issue.

Natural man is therefore not to be considered spiritually a totally inert being, a "stock and block," "stark blind and stone deaf." Even without the restraining influence of common grace, if death had been permitted to run its full course in him, he would not have become such an inert object. Those that are in hell are not such inert objects, for death does not mean lifeless only, but the opposite of life. They see and hear and feel, for death has destroyed nothing of that in them. What death actually does is not destroy any of man's faculties, but corrupt them, so that they function in a perverted manner, against God, His will and His grace, even against man's own interests. Being completely ruled by the lie of sin and by enmity against God, they hate the good as evil, and love the evil as good, and are therefore unable to do that

which is good and inclined to do that which is evil. For a creature that is responsible to God, and has to fall into His hands, such a condition is much more terrible than that of an inert object.

Through common grace, however, the death of the natural man is such not in the full but in a mitigated sense. There are still in him "a few remains of the excellent gifts, which he had received from God" (Confession of Faith, Art. 14), he is not to be considered as having lost all receptivity for spiritual or higher influences. And although incapable to do spiritual good, he is still capable to perform natural, civil, and external religious good. "There remain, however," as it is said in the Canons of Dort (III and IV, 4) "in man since the fall the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment."

This is not Arminian but pure Reformed doctrine. The difference is not only that the Arminians ascribe to the natural man the ability to perform even spiritual good, the ability to believe and to repent, but also that the Arminians consider the remains of good that are left in man as due to himself, but the Reformed, as due to divine grace.

168. **Eternal Death.**—Eternal death is the condition of complete ruin, corruption, and extreme misery in the place of perdition, — the result of total separation from God.

169. **Denial of Eternal Death.**—Ever increasing opposition is evinced against the doctrine of eternal death as the punishment of sin. In many circles it has been rejected; our times are too enlightened to believe in such a theory. Certain sects as the Adventists and the Russellites have accepted this denial as part of their creed and propagate it with all their might. They hold the theory of a so-called "conditional immortality," the theory that man receives immortality through regeneration, and that death means annihilation. That death is annihilation follows, according to them, from the use of such words as "destruction," "ruin," "perdition," etc. And the meaning of "eternal" in expressions as eternal pain, eternal judgment, eternal damnation they try to explain away by pointing to passages in which "eternal" does not mean endless, but only a long period of time, as when the Passover is called "an ordinance for ever," Exod. 12:17, or when in a certain case it is said of a slave that he shall serve his master "for ever," Exod. 21:6.

170. **Everlasting Punishment Decidedly the Teaching of Scripture.**—That, however, in respect to the punishment of sin "eternal"

does mean nothing less than endless, everlasting, is evident from Matt. 25:46, where "eternal punishment" and "eternal life" are contrasted with each other. If the former does not mean everlasting punishment, the latter cannot mean everlasting life.

> Matt. 25:46, And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life.

171. **Justice of Eternal Punishment**—The justice of eternal punishment follows from the fact mentioned in § 164, that death, eternal death, is the natural consequence of sin. Furthermore, such a penalty is equal to the transgression. The greatest possible transgression demands the greatest possible punishment. Sin is the greatest transgression possible, since it is directed against the infinite majesty of God; it therefore demands eternal punishment. And since the sinner cannot bear this punishment infinitely in degree, as Christ could do it and has done it, he shall have to bear it infinitely in duration. And finally each person lost shall, abandoned to his depravity, continue to make himself worthy of the punishment meted out to him.

6. Misery of Man

172. **Extent of Man's Misery.**—Man's misery in consequence of the fall has three parts: sin, guilt, and spiritual impotence. First comes sin, which in itself makes him miserable. This misery of sin is the greater because through sin man renders himself guilty and punishable before God, since God's law is not intended to be for man a piece of good advice, but is the expression of His absolute will, so that man is in duty bound to obey it; and wherever duty is not performed, there a debt is incurred. To complete his misery, there is in the third place man's spiritual impotence to deliver himself from sin or to pay his debt instead of increasing it daily.

173. **Spiritual Impotence.**—By spiritual impotence is meant, not that the natural man cannot achieve anything which is good in the natural, civic, or externally religious spheres of life, but that he is unable to achieve that which is spiritually good, such as saving faith, true conversion, good works proceeding from a true faith, performed according to the law of God, and to His glory.

It is especially against this doctrine that all Pelagianism is so violently opposed. The Pelagians do not have the profound view of sin and guilt that the Reformed have, but nevertheless acknowledge both. The doctrine of man's spiritual impotence, however, they vehemently deny. In view of the fact that this doctrine, together with that of predestination, is very humiliating for man's proud heart, it is no wonder that it finds little favor.

174. **Man Inclined to Hate God and his Fellowman.**—In the Catechism (Qu. 5) we confess that we are "prone by nature to hate God and our neighbor," and this expression, too, has found much opposition. Still, that is what the Scriptures teach, Rom. 8:7; Tit. 3:3, and what experience teaches also. And "to hate" does not mean here to love in a lesser degree, for to love in a lesser degree is nevertheless to love and not to hate. On the other hand the expression does not mean that every act of the natural man is a manifestation of hatred, as though corruption has already reached its final issue; but that the inclination to hatred is there, ready to reveal itself as soon as the occasion prompts, as soon as self-interest seriously conflicts with the interests of others. That which then reveals itself is hatred, which desires the removal of the other and makes a man at heart a murderer.

> Rom. 8:7, Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.
>
> Tit. 3:3, For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

That the surface of the natural life is adorned with much well-meant love can be admitted, but at the bottom it is a "loving them that love you," Matt. 5:46, and even then it is the fruit of divine grace.

The expression of the Catechism brings out in strong relief the satanic character of our natural depravity. To hate God — how hellish! Is not God the highest good? Is not everything in Him pure, beautiful, glorious, worthy of being desired, of being prized most highly, of being praised and glorified in adoring admiration? How extreme, then, must be the depravity, the degeneration of man, that he is by nature inclined to hate such a God!

175. **Total Depravity**—Such a depravity may surely be called a total depravity. Still, also in regard to this "total" the fact must be taken into consideration that, as has been pointed out, through the grace of God the total depravity of the natural man is not equal to the utter depravity of Satan. "Total" here does not refer to the degree but to the character and extent of our depravity. It is a total depravity as being of a thoroughly wicked character and as having perverted the whole man, all that is in him, leaving nothing untouched. It is a depravity, therefore, of such a nature that man is in need, not of a moral improvement only, as the Arminians teach, but of a regeneration, a being born anew, John 3:3, by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, so that he becomes a new creature, 2 Cor. 5:17.

176. **Moral Freedom.**—That man has moral freedom or a free

will, in so far that he is in a position to act from conscious motives according to his own choice, without any coercion, cannot be denied without at the same time denying man's responsibility. For in so far as it concerns man's personal life and conduct, outside of covenant relations, he can be held responsible only for what he does from his own choice. To deny moral freedom would be, therefore, a very serious error, and would be in direct conflict with the teaching of Scripture in regard to man's responsibility. The warning, for instance, that man shall be held responsible for his unbelief and impenitence is substantiated by pointing to his unwillingness to believe and to repent, Luke 13:34; 19:27; John 5:40.

Luke 19:27, But these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them bring hither, and slay them before me.

John 5:40, And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.

But that man is morally free, that he has a free will, means only that he does the evil, that he does do, from his own choice, in accordance with his own depraved nature. He is a slave of sin, John 8:34; 2 Pet. 2:19, a slave so completely that he serves his master voluntarily. His freedom is, therefore, but the mockery of real freedom, a deceptive freedom, John 8:36, but it is still a freedom, a freedom which makes him responsible.

The freedom which the Scriptures ascribe to man by nature is, therefore, a freedom very different from that which the Pelagians ascribe to him. It is not the freedom to do the good as well as the evil. Such freedom is denied in the places mentioned before (John 8:34, 36; 2 Pet. 2:19), and very positively in John 6:44, 65.

John 8:34, Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin.

2 Pet. 2:19, Promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.

John 6:65, And He said, For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it be given unto him of the Father.

177. **The Depravity of Man and Predestination.**—These two doctrines are so closely related that as parts of the Confession they stand or fall together. If we confess that the depravity of man is a depravity through which he comes to hate God and His service, Rom. 8:7, and loves darkness rather than light, John 3:19, and therefore as a depravity through which he becomes not only unable but also unwilling to believe and repent, then we must also, as has been remarked in § 104, confess that he can only come to faith and repentance through irresistible grace, hence through a deed of God, for which the cause, why it is granted to one and not to the other must lie in God, in His will, in His decree, in Predestination.

Whoever, therefore, accepts the doctrine of spiritual impotence

cannot deny the doctrine of Predestination, since for him it is certain that without Predestination no one would be saved. And whoever rejects the doctrine of Predestination must also reject that of man's spiritual impotence, and must, contrary to the evident teaching of Scripture, attribute to man a free will for doing spiritual good.

178. **Natural Depravity and Regeneration.**—In certain circles the regenerate, too, are considered as incapable of doing any good and inclined to all wickedness. This, however, is contrary to Scripture and Confession both. To the question: Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to do all wickedness? the Catechism answers: Indeed we are; except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God (Qu. 8). Here, therefore, the Church confesses that such cannot be said of those that are regenerated. And the Scriptures plainly teach that to a certain extent the capacity for doing that which is spiritually good is restored. The regenerated person finds his pleasure in the law of God, Ps. 119:97; Rom. 7:22, he can bear fruits in which God is glorified, John 15:5, 8, and do good works, Tit. 2:14.

> Ps. 119:97, Oh how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.
>
> Rom. 7:22, For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.
>
> John 15:5, 8, I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from Me ye can do nothing. . . . . v. 8, Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be My disciples.
>
> Tit. 2:14, Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.

179. **Pelagian Teaching Concerning Man's Natural Condition.**—The Pelagians are of the opinion that man is still born in the same condition in which according to them Adam was created, a condition of innocence, intermediate between good and evil. The general corruption of mankind is to be ascribed, not to any connection whatever with Adam's sin, but to evil influences which affect the child from the beginning.

180. **Man by Nature Blind to his Misery.**—By nature man does not realize his own misery; he feels that he is imperfect, but to his misery as it really is, he is blind. As his whole being is corrupt, the eye with which he views himself is also corrupt. And therefore he, who is wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, can imagine himself to be rich, to have gotten riches, and to have need of nothing ,Rev. 3:17. This blindness renders his misery the more fatal.

181. **Practical Import of Knowledge of our Misery.**—Knowledge of our misery is necessary in order to make us flee from the wrath to come and seek salvation in Christ. As long as it is lacking, no need will be felt for redemption, and the latter will not be desired nor sought. And without being sought and desired it is not gained. It is true that in redemption we are not the first, but Christ, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, Luke 19:10. But Christ is the first by making us seeking ones, for also in saving He treats us as persons, as rational creatures, John 6:37. And He makes us seeking ones through opening our eyes for our misery, so that we see it, and opening our ears for the Gospel, so that we believe it.

> John 6:37, All that which the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.

THIRD DIVISION

THE DOCTRINE OF THE MEDIATOR

INTRODUCTION

182. **Concerning the Possibility of Redemption.**—In the preceding part we have seen that man through sinning has thrown himself into ruin; that thereby he has: a) deprived himself of eternal life, to which the way had been opened to him, and b) brought guilt upon himself of such a nature that eternal death was its just desert. And now arises the question as to whether there is a way to escape that punishment and be again received into favor, so that again a way might be opened for him to obtain eternal life.

This would seem to require one of these three:

a) that it be possible for God to leave sin unpunished;
b) or that it be possible for man to satisfy the demands for redemption;
c) or that some other one satisfy these demands for man.

183. **Whether God Can Permit Sin to Go Unpunished.**—The first question, then, is if God, who is the sovereign One, can permit sin to go unpunished. But the sovereignty of God cannot be a sovereignty which would deny His virtues, and permitting sin to go unpunished would involve this denial. God would thereby deny His truthfulness, His justice, and His holiness.

a) **His truthfulness,** whereby He maintains His word, be it promise or threat, as expressed by His name Jehovah (Cf. § 51). Beforehand He threatened: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," Gen. 2:17, and if, after man had sinned, He would not carry out His threat, He would not act as the truthful One. He even would then no longer be the truthful One, nor have the right to require to be acknowledged and honored as the truthful One. Failing to carry out His threat, His promises would also become unreliable, and therefore worthless.

b) **His justice,** whereby He rewards good and punishes evil according to most holy justice. To permit sin to go unpunished would not be to act as the just One, would be to cease to be the just

One, would be to forfeit the right to be regarded and honored as the just One.

c) **His holiness,** whereby He has an infinite aversion of sin. But permitting sin to go unpunished would be to act as if He connived at sin as something not very serious, and thus to have fellowship with sin. It would be to sacrifice His holiness, to silence the heavenly jubilation: Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts.

Denial of these virtues is all the more impossible as a Being without these virtues could not be a Being of infinite perfection, and therefore could not be God. And since the divine virtues are one with His being, denial of these virtues would be denial of Himself.

Moreover, to leave sin unpunished would have brought man only a redemption in part. It would have delivered him from punishment, but have left him without any prospect of eternal life.

Our Catechism states it very impressively: "God will have His justice satisfied; and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another" (Qu. 12).

No redemption without satisfaction, that is the inexorable demand of divine truthfulness, justice, and holiness.

184. **Whether Man Himself Can Make the Necessary Satisfaction.**—Since it is entirely out of question that it be possible for God to leave sin unpunished, and full satisfaction must be made, we have now to consider whether man can make this satisfaction.

This, of course, depends upon the nature of the satisfaction that is demanded, and in order to find that out we must turn to the Covenant of Works, for in that Covenant we still have our creditor, as our breaking it did not free us from its demands.

In the Covenant of Works, as we know, in the first place a perfect obedience to the divine law was demanded, and only on condition of such an obedience eternal life was promised. This demand stands forever, so that never any one shall be permitted to enter heaven, unless he possesses this perfect obedience to all the divine commands. This then is the first part of the satisfaction that must be made.

Secondly, the Covenant of Works announced death to man if he should disobey. This stipulation of the Covenant of Works also stands forever. Never shall it be possible for any man to again be received into divine favor, unless he has undergone death in its full sense. Man has disobeyed; he therefore must die. This is the second part of the satisfaction that must be made.

Thus in spite of man's breaking it, the Covenant of Works stands unimpaired, for it is a Covenant given by God who changes not. His truthfulness, justice, and holiness cannot suffer any encroachment upon it.

Can man himself provide such a satisfaction? It is natural that the question should first arise if man himself can do this. He has incurred the debt and is therefore responsible for it. But can he pay it?

This question cannot be answered otherwise than in the negative. The first step in that satisfaction would be the fulfilling of the law, and that he cannot do, because of the fact that through sin he has become incapable of all spiritually good, Rom. 3:10-12. And as regards the second part, the bearing of the penalty, this he cannot do in such a way that it would bring him salvation. He can do it, for all those who shall be lost shall have to do it and shall be able to do it, but they shall have to do it eternally; there never will come a moment when it is completed, so that they may go into life everlasting; they can bear the penalty, but never bear it to completion. Because of the fact that sin is sin against the infinite majesty of God, its punishment is an infinite punishment; the penalty can be borne to completion if it is borne infinite in severity; but finite man cannot do this; he can but bear it infinite in duration, and therefore not in a way so that he will ever complete it.

> Rom. 3:10-12, As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one.

185. **Whether Another Can Provide Satisfaction for Man.**— This is the only question that remains, but it is a hopeless one. If it is impossible that God permit sin to go unpunished, and if it is also impossible that man give satisfaction, this seems still more impossible. For, in the first place, this possibility seems to be precluded by the divine justice which demands that the soul that sinneth shall die, Ezek. 18:4, and not another in its stead. Secondly, this possibility seems to be precluded by the fact that man seems to have not the slightest hope of finding one willing to do so, willing to suffer death to its final issue to bear for man the infinite wrath of God. And thirdly, the possibility seems to be precluded by the fact that for this purpose a wonderful, almost impossible personality would have to be found for this task. An angel cannot do it, man cannot do it, even one of the Divine Persons as such cannot do it. For reasons to be discussed later (§ 194), He who would be Mediator for man must be man, very man, and a righteous man, and at the same time in the same person very God, a person therefore who united in himself complete opposites. Who then could regard the redemption of man otherwise than impossible?

Such then was the condition of fallen man. How sure Satan must have been of his prey! What a folly the Paradise Gospel must have seemed to him!

And still in this only remaining way true salvation is to be found. For such a Redeemer is found. Not by man, but by God. He, against whom man had become a rebel, has provided a Redeemer for man. A Redeemer in whom, in virtue of His wise disposal (Cf. § 212) the soul that had sinned should die. A Redeemer who was willing to give His soul as a ransom. A Redeemer who in one Person was very God and very man. This Redeemer was His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom He has given to be the Savior of the world, John 3:16.

186. **The Savior a Surety and a Mediator.**—The Lord Jesus is called a Surety, Hebr. 7:22, and a Mediator, 1 Tim. 2:5. A surety is one who takes upon himself the responsibility for the debt, default, or miscarriage of another, and a mediator is one who interposes between two parties at variance in order to reconcile them. Christ is both, and to be our Savior He must be both. There could be no question about anything to be undertaken for our salvation, unless a competent surety would take upon himself the responsibility for our sin and guilt and would pledge himself to satisfy the demands of divine justice. This is what Christ has done in the Covenant of Redemption, and so He became our Surety. Neither could there be question of our being reconciled to God without a mediator, because it was impossible for a holy God to have any dealings in that direction with sinful man, and for sinful man to have access to God. Christ has taken upon Himself to be that Mediator and has brought about that blessed reconciliation, 2 Cor. 5:18-20.

> Hebr. 7:22, By so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant.
>
> 1 Tim. 2:5, For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus.
>
> 2 Cor. 5:18, 19, But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

187. **Division of this Part.**—In this part we will have to consider: 1. the Person, — 2, the Names, — 3. the Offices, — and 4. the States of the Mediator.

1. The Person of the Mediator

188. **The Person of the Mediator Wonderful.**—One of the names given the Mediator in Is. 9:6 is Wonderful, and we are involuntarily reminded of that name when we discuss His Person, for it is won-

derful. Wonderful, especially in that He is both true God and true man in one Person. Notwithstanding the fact that the difference between God and man is not only an infinite but also an essential difference, which can never be bridged, yet in Christ God has given us a Savior who is in one Person both God and man, and who therefore in one Person is both infinite and finite, omniscient and not omniscient, omnipotent and not omnipotent, etc. One Person, and that Person two natures: a divine and a human nature.

Is. 9:6, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

189. **Not such a Person from Eternity.**—The Mediator did not exist thus from eternity, but only since the fullness of time, when He became man. From eternity He was a divine Person, with a divine nature; but when He became man, He took on in addition a human nature. Now, however, He shall retain both natures in all eternity. With His human nature He ascended into heaven, with His human nature He sits at the right hand of God, and with His human nature He shall return to judge the quick and the dead, Acts 1:11.

Acts 1:11, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven.

190. **One Person and Two Natures.**—In Christ there is duality of natures, not a duality of persons.

One Person. A person is defined as: "Any being having life, intelligence, will, and separate, individual existence." This "having a separate, individual existence" implies that there cannot be a union of two persons in one another, for then each one would have lost his separate existence and would not longer be a person. In agreement with this is the fact that the unity of the three Persons in the Trinity is not a unity as to Persons, but only as to Essence. Thus in Christ there is only one Person, and that is the Divine Person, the second Person in the Trinity. When on earth He spoke of Himself as "I," and as the same "I" that He was before the incarnation, John 8:58; 17:5. The work of redemption demanded two natures, which would be the natures of one Person (Cf. § 194, d).

John 8:58, Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am.

John 17:5, And now, Father, glorify Thou Me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

Two Natures. A divine nature which was His from eternity as divine Person, to which belonged everything that is essentially divine, and a human nature, to which belonged everything that is

essentially human; a human body and a human soul, a human reason, a human will, human inclinations — all this He has assumed, the whole human nature, nothing that was really human excepted, but not a human personality. Although with us such a complete human nature constitutes a person, it was not so with Christ, as it had no separate, individual existence, but existed in the divine Person, and was inseparably united with it.

191. **A Humiliated Human Nature.**—The human nature which Christ took upon Himself was a human nature as that of Adam before the fall, pure and holy, but instead of sharing the glorious condition of Adam, it was a nature sharing the degraded, weakened, sunken condition that was the result of sin. He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, Phil. 2:7; He was made in all things like unto His brethren, Hebr. 2:17; He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8:3. It was a holy, undefiled human nature, but laden with the results of sin, subject to suffering and death, because the iniquity of us all was laid on Him, Is. 53:6; because He, who knew not sin, was made to be sin on our behalf, 2 Cor. 5:21.

Christ was one of us, true man, because He was born of a woman. He was holy, because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:35. Because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He was not a son of Adam, not included in the human race of which Adam was the Covenant-head, not involved in Adam's breaking of that Covenant, and consequently without original sin. The one as well as the other was necessary to be our Substitute, for that required that He should be true man, but perfectly righteous man.

> Luke 1:35, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God.

192. **The Union of the Two Natures.**—The union of the two natures in Christ is for us a deep mystery. With a view to the many heresies in respect to this matter at that time, the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 declared that the two natures were united in Christ "without mixture and without change, without division and without separation." In this formula the words "without division and without separation" emphasize the unity of the two natures; they exist in Christ not separated, each apart from the other, so that His Person would be divided into a divine and a human part; they are one in Him. And the words "without mixture and without change" emphasize the fact that nevertheless each nature remained the same without alteration, that these natures have not mingled with each other, that not out of these two natures a third mixed, divine-human nature arose. For the

rest, this formula is not intended to explain that which is not explicable for us; quite the contrary, it brings out sharply the incomprehensibleness of the Person of the Mediator, whose name is Wonderful. The terms used in the formula are contradictory to one another.

The Lutheran Church holds that the union of the two natures resulted in a "communication of properties," i.e. a communication of that which is characteristic of one nature to the other, a communication of properties of the divine nature to the human, so that, especially since the ascension, the human nature also is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. Luther thought that the Lord's Supper demands a bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine (Cf. § 346), and in this manner he thought that he could explain this bodily presence. Here, however, the great Reformer lost sight of the fact that God is infinitely exalted above all creature, and essentially different from it, so that between the Divine and the human there is a chasm that cannot be bridged over. Deification of the human, the human nature of Christ not excepted, on the contrary, must proceed from the idea that the Divine is essentially of the same nature as the human, and is, therefore, virtually a denial of this difference and a debasement of the infinite majesty of God.

There is, however, a community of interests of the two natures, a participating of one nature in what the other is and has and does. In this sense it is said of the Lord Jesus in the flesh and while on earth, that He was in heaven, John 3:13, and is it stated of Him, speaking of Him as God, that He has purchased the Church "with His own blood," Acts 20:28. Herein lies the significance for the work of redemption of the fact that the two natures were united in one Person (Cf. § 194, d).

193. **Proofs that Christ is such a Person.**—Scriptures teach very plainly that Christ was indeed such a wonderful Person: truly God, truly man, righteous man, and God and man in one Person.

a) **That He is truly God.** In the treatment of the Trinity we have given ample proofs for the Divinity of Christ, showing that the Scriptures in a number of places accord to Him divine names, attributes, works, and honor, as so many testimonies of His being truly God (Cf. § 88). For that reason it will be sufficient here to mention only the texts in which it is expressly stated: John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; 1 John 5:20.

> John 1:1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
>
> Rom. 9:5, Whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

1 John 5:20, And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

b) **That He is truly man.** That He is truly man is evident from the fact that He had a true human body, 1 Pet. 2:24, which was susceptible to fatigue, John 4:6, to hunger, Luke 4:2, thirst, John 19:28; and a true human soul, Matt. 26:38. In 1 Tim. 2:5 He is expressly called "the man Christ Jesus."

1 Pet. 2:24, Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.

John 4:6, Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus by the well.

Luke 4:2, And He did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, He hungered.

John 19:28, After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the Scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst.

Matt. 26:38, Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

1 Tim. 2:5, For there is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus.

c) **That He is righteous man.** His perfect sinlessness and holiness is expressed in 1 Pet. 2:22; Hebr. 7:26; Luke 1:35. He could say to His enemies who were always on the watch: Which of you convicteth Me of sin? John 8:46.

1 Pet. 2:22, Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

Hebr. 7:26, For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

Luke 1:35, See under §191.

d) **That He is God and man in one Person.** That the Person of Christ is one, is evident from His sayings and actions. There is never anything to be found that would make one think of a double personality, but always the same "I." According to John 1:14 in Him the Word has become flesh, and according to 1 Tim. 3:16 He is "God revealed in the flesh. He could not be spoken of in such a manner if His human nature "the flesh," had a personality of its own.

194. **Necessity for Being such a Person.**—Such a Person: very God, very man, righteous man, God and man in one Person, the Savior must be in order to be able to accomplish the work of redemption.

a) **Very God,** 1) because the wrath of God against sin must be borne in its full infinite force, so that it was borne to its full extent and propitiated. This mere man can never do. It is possible only for a person who is very God, for only an infinite person can bear an infinite burden; — 2) because the work of redemption must

be of such a value, that it was sufficient for the innumerable multitude of the elect. Such it could only be when accomplished by One who was very God, for then the infinite worthiness of His Person gave infinite worthiness to His work.

b) **Very man,** for 1) man had sinned, and therefore the punishment must also be borne by a man, one who was truly man. — 2) both in soul and body had sin been committed, and therefore the punishment had to be borne in soul and body, in a human nature which was a complete human nature.

Divine justice even demanded that the very soul that sinned should die, Ezek. 18: 4, 20, not another in its stead but that soul itself. This made it impossible for a substitute to die for all the elect, unless they were united with Him into one body. This union with Christ, however, is a fact. The elect, or in the actual sense the redeemed, are the body of Christ, and it was in consequence of this union that Christ, dying for them, died for His own body, and that in Him the soul that had sinned, died. But this union with Christ into one body was possible only through His being very man.

c) **Righteous man,** for if Christ had been sinful, He would have had need of the entire atonement Himself without being able to benefit others in any respect. The entire atonement would not even be sufficient for Himself, for it would not be a perfect atonement. It is truly said that one who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others (Catechism, Qu. 16). He cannot even satisfy for himself.

d) **God and man in one Person,** for in the first place, as we have seen, Christ had to bear the infinite burden of the wrath of God in His sufferings and death. For that reason He must be very God. But His divine nature could not suffer and die, and therefore He needed a human nature that could suffer and die. This implies, however, that it was the finite human nature that had to bear that infinite burden. This would have been impossible if the human nature had had a separate existence as a person. But it was possible because His human nature had its existence in the divine Person. For that reason it was impossible for the human nature to succumb under the infinite burden of Divine wrath as long as the divine Person could bear it. — And secondly, Christ must be very God in order that the infinite worthiness of His Person should give an infinite worthiness to His work. The human nature of Christ, which was the nature that performed the work, could only have that infinite worthiness through its inseparable union with the divine Person.

2. The Names of the Mediator

195. **Many Names.**—A fact worthy of note is the number of

names given to the Mediator in the Holy Scriptures. Even in the Old Testament the number is large; we mention but the following: Lord (Jehovah), Gen. 19:24, the Lord our Righteousness, Jer. 23:6, Wonderful, Councellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, Is. 9:6. And in the New Testament the number is still greater: the Word, the Lamb of God, the last Adam, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Amen, the true and faithful Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, etc. The most common names of the Mediator are: Jesus, His personal name, and Christ, His official name. Christ frequently called himself the "Son of Man."

This number of names reveals the effort of the Holy Spirit to show in many ways who and what He is. Each name is a revelation of His glory as Savior.

196. **The Name Jesus.**—The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua (the Lord delivers) as is evident from Acts 7:45 and Hebr. 4:8, where Joshua, the son of Nun, is also called "Jesus." The two Joshuas of the Old Testament are evidently prototypes of the Savior: Joshua, the son of Nun, was such as the man who led Israel into Canaan and caused them to take possession of the land. And Joshua, the son of Josedach, the high priest, was such as the leader of those who returned from Babylon. It was this Joshua who, being crowned with crowns at the command of the Lord, was pointed out by the prophet Zechariah as the type of Him who was "to build the temple of the Lord, bear the glory, sit and rule upon His throne, and be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (throne and priesthood)," Zech. 6:11-13.

Because of the command of the Lord delivered in the message of the angel, Matt. 1:21, this name was given Him at circumcision, Luke 2:21, to make Him known as the Savior.

197. **What "Saving" Means.**—By saving, saving sinners, is meant: 1) to deliver them from the greatest evil, from sin with its guilt and punishment; 2) to bring them to the highest good, to reconciliation with God and eternal life.

This requires of the Savior a twofold work: not only that of meriting salvation, as the Arminians teach, but also that of applying salvation, of making the elect actual partakers of it, or as it is usually expressed: Jesus saves sinners through merit and application, Is. 53:5, John 10:28. The first work was done by Him when He was upon earth, the second is a work that He continues to do from the beginning to the end of the world. This work of application is performed through the general offer of salvation in the Gospel, by which offer the right is graciously given to take

it, to appropriate it freely, without money and without price, Is. 55:1, and through the operation of the Holy Spirit, by whose regenerating work we must be enabled to come and to take the water of life, Rev. 22:17.

Is. 53:5, But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

John 10:28, And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

198. **The Name Christ.**—The name Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah (the Anointed). It is a name given Him in the Old Testament, Ps. 2:2; 45:7b; Is. 61:1, and which indicates Him as the One anointed of God to be our chief Prophet, our only High priest, and our eternal King, for persons were anointed to these three offices only. The disciples called Him by that name in the beginning, when they learned to know and to believe in Him, John 1:41.

John 1:41, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).

199. **The Old Testament Anointing.**—The name Christ, therefore, indicates Him as the Anointed of God. It refers to the rite of anointing as an institution intended to foreshadow Him.

This rite of anointing was instituted when Aaron was to be installed in his priestly office, Exod. 29. The Lord commanded Moses to pour ointment upon his head, so that it ran down his person, Ps. 133:2. This ointment had to be made according to a prescription received from the Lord Himself from a definite number of rare and very fragrant herbs, and might not be imitated nor used in any other manner. He who violated this command was to be put to death, for the ointment was holy, Exod. 30:22-23.

By means of this anointment two things were indicated: ordination and qualification. It was intended to be a sign and an assurance to the one anointed, that the Lord had ordained him, i. e. had destined and called him, and would qualify him for his task.

Anointing was used only in the case of those who were called to fill the position of prophet, priest, or king. Of many persons who filled one of these offices it is not mentioned that they were anointed, but whenever a case of anointing is spoken of, it was always a prophet (Elisha, 1 Kings 19:16), or a priest (Aaron and his sons, Exod 29), or a king (Saul, David, Solomon, Jehu), who is anointed, and never any other.

All this is typical of the full reality in Christ, the Anointed of God, for He is: a) anointed, and that not with measure, John 3:34, with the Holy Spirit of whom the fragrant ointment was a type,

Acts 10:32; b) anointed to all these offices: Prophetic, High Priestly and Kingly; c) anointed as One who was ordained of God for these offices from eternity, and was qualified for them in time, especially when He became man, and at the time of His Baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him; d) anointed as to His entire Person, as to both His divine and His human nature, although the anointment could not have the same significance for both natures. Christ was ordained according to both natures, but qualified only according to His human nature, since His divine nature, being infinitely perfect, could receive no qualification. Preeminent among the excellencies by which His human nature was prepared for its task are: wisdom as Prophet, revealed in His teaching; holiness as Priest who was to be Himself the Lamb without blemish and without spot; and power as King, revealed in His miracles.

> Acts 10:38, Even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.
>
> John 3:34, For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for He giveth not the Spirit by measure.

200. **The Name "Son of Man."**—This name is very likely appropriated from Dan. 7:13, 14, for repeatedly did the Lord apply that prophecy to Himself, Matt. 16:27; 24:30; 26:64. In that prophecy the Messiah was indicated as "one like unto a son of man," to whom "was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." The use of this appellation was therefore as much as announcing Himself very plainly to Israel as the Messiah, all the more since that prophecy was generally accepted by the Jews as Messianic. It reminded them at the same time of the fact that His humble appearance, "like unto a son of man," was in full accord with the Scriptures, and that it was to such a one that dominion, glory, and a kingdom were to be given.

The name "the Son of man," however, was more definite than the expression "like unto a son of man." The Lord Jesus was the Son of man indeed, the Son not of a human pair, but of humanity, being the seed of the woman, and having taken upon Himself not a human person, but the human nature.

On one occasion the Jews said unto Jesus: How long dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly, John 10:24. Surely the Lord had not failed to do that. He even did it with the name with which He was wont to call Himself; but they had not ears to hear, nor a heart to give heed.

> Dan. 7:13, 14, I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples,

nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Matt. 26:64, Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

3. The Offices of the Mediator

201. **What is Meant by an Office.**—In civil affairs an officer is one to whom the magistrates have assigned a certain task and have given the needed authority to accomplish this task. Therefore, the task he has to perform is really the task of the government, and the power and authority he has the right to use are really the power and the authority of the government. He does the work of the government, represents the government, and appears with the power and the authority of the government. Such an office holder, for instance, is a police officer whose duty it is to keep the peace of the community, and who has the power to arrest disturbers thereof. An office, therefore, is in general the administration of authority in the name of him who vested the office bearer with authority.

In the same way there are office holders in the Church: Ministers of the Gospel, Elders, Deacons, each of whom has received from Christ, the King of the Church, a task to perform in His name and with His power and authority.

And thus Christ Himself is the highest office bearer who was anointed of God, that is, ordained and qualified, for a threefold office, to perform with divine power and authority a threefold task, viz., on behalf of God to teach as Prophet, to sacrifice as Priest, and to rule as King.

202. **The Two Aspects of an Office.**—An office, therefore, has two aspects, that of serving and that of executing authority. In respect to him who vested with authority, the office bearer is a servant, but in respect to those with whom he accomplishes his task, he is one vested with authority, appearing with high power. This is true also in the case of the offices of Christ. With respect to God the Father, His work was to serve, John 4:34, the Father calls Him His servant, Isaiah 53:11b. But with respect to men he appeared as one having authority. As such He taught, Matt. 7:29, forgave sins, Luke 5:20, appointed unto the disciples the Kingdom, Luke 22:29, bestowed upon the malefactor God's Paradise, Luke 23:43.

John 4:34, Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.

CHRIST'S PROPHETIC OFFICE

203. **The Prophetic Office.**—A prophet is an office bearer to whom God has given the task of speaking to the people as His representative, to make His will known to them. He is a preacher who makes his appearance in God's name, brings God's message to man, and whose words must be received by men as the words could concern the present or the future. The first was the case of God: "Thus saith the Lord." Under the Old Testament dispensation the prophets received the message which they were to deliver through ever new and special revelations, and this message whenever the message concerned the contents of the Covenant of Grace, and in such instances the prophets were preachers of the Gospel demanding faith and conversion, e. g. Is. 55:1, Jer. 3:14; Ezek. 33:11. The latter was the case whenever the message had as its contents announcements of judgments which were to overtake Israel or one of the other nations because of their sins. In addition they performed miracles. In brief, therefore, their work was threefold: to preach the truths of salvation, to foretell future events, and to perform miracles.

The prophets of the New Testament are the ministers of the Gospel, for they are called by the Lord as His ambassadors to proclaim to man the saving message of the Gospel, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20. But they do not receive their message through special revelations; they have theirs in the completed revelation in the Holy Scripture, and their task is to give instruction in this through making the meaning clear (explanation), and showing its significance for life (application). A further difference between them and the prophets of the Old Testament is that they do not foretell future events or perform miracles.

> Is. 55:1, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.
>
> Jer. 3:14, Return, O backsliding children, saith Jehovah; for I am a husband unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.
>
> 2 Cor. 5:19, 20, To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.

204. **Proofs that Christ is a Prophet.**—That Christ is a Prophet is evident because: a) it is directly stated that He is a Prophet; He is called such, Deut. 18: 15; Luke 24:19; b) He has done everything which pertains to the work of a prophet, for: 1) He has preached the Gospel, Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 2) He has foretold future

events, especially concerning Israel, Jerusalem, and the end of the world, Matt. 24, 25; 3) He has performed a number of miracles.

> Deut. 18:15, Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken (Cf. Acts 3:22).
>
> Luke 24:19, And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.

205. **The various Ways in which Christ has Ministered this Office.**—Under the Old Testament dispensation Christ performed the tasks belonging to His prophetic office through the prophets, "in whom was the Spirit of Christ," 1 Pet. 1:11. During the time of His stay upon earth He did this by being active among men as a prophet Himself, Hebr. 1:1, 2. Since His ascension He still does this Himself through His Word and His Spirit, and He does it through men, through preachers, especially through ordained ministers of the Gospel, who are His ambassadors, 2 Cor. 5:20. He does it Himself through His Word, in which He has given a complete revelation of God and the way of salvation. He does it Himself through His Spirit, which He promised to send in His place, to guide us in all the truth, John 16:13. And He does it through the ministers of the Gospel, using them to have the Word preached within the Church for the building up of His body, and without the Church to have it spread abroad into all the world.

CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE

206. **The Priestly Office.**—A priest is an office bearer who has received from God the task and the authority to treat for man with God, Hebr. 5:1. Thus, whereas a prophet is one sent by God to man to speak to men on His behalf, a priest is one who is appointed by God to be sent to Him by the people, and to treat for them with Him.

> Hebr. 5:1, For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

The work of a priest is: a) to sacrifice; b) to make intercession, and c) to pronounce the benediction on the congregation. To sacrifice and to make intercession are both a treating with God in behalf of man, with the purpose of obtaining mercy and favor from God for men. Pronouncing the benediction is an announcement from God of divine mercy and favor graciously granted in answer to the priestly sacrifice and prayer. Pronouncing the blessing upon Israel was in the Old Testament expressly connected with the priestly office, Num. 6:22-27.

A minister of the Gospel, therefore, acts in public worship as a prophet in the preaching of the Word, and as a priest in leading in prayer and in pronouncing the blessing.

207. **Proofs that Christ is a Priest.**—That Christ is a Priest is to be proved the same way as that He is a Prophet (Cf. §204), viz. from two facts: a) that it is expressly stated by calling Him a Priest, a High Priest, Hebr. 7:21, 26; and b) that He has done everything which belongs to the work of a priest, for: 1) He offered Himself for us, Hebr. 9:14; 2) He prays for us, Luke 22:31, 32; Rom. 8:34; 3) He blesses us, Luke 24:50.

Hebr. 7:26, For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

Hebr. 9:14, How much shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Rom. 8:34, It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Luke 24:50, And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.

208. **Christ a Priest after the Order of Melchisedec.**—Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, because He is, as is explained in Hebrews 7, a royal priest (verse 1), unlike Aaron, but like Melchisedec, and because He is an only and eternal priest (verse 3), without predecessors or successors, which Aaron did have, but Melchisedec did not.

A distinction must be made between the priesthood of thankfulness and that of reconciliation. The former is the original priesthood, that of Adam in Paradise. The latter, that of the Aaronitic priests, was made necessary by sin, and came to an end when all the shadows of the Old Testament were fulfilled. The priesthood of Christ is both that of thankfulness and of reconciliation. Leaving out the question whether or not the reconciliatory priesthood of Christ will come to an end when the redemption of all the elect will be accomplished (it will in all eternity remain the ground for the salvation of the redeemed, and a motive for glorifying Him), it is evident that His priesthood of thankfulness is a royal and eternal priesthood after the order of Melchisedec.

209. **What Christ as Priest has Merited for Us.**—As Priest the Mediator has sacrificed Himself so as to gain for us a twofold obedience: a passive and an active obedience; a passive obedience by bearing the penalty of sin, and an active obedience by perfectly fulfilling all the demands of the law of God. (Cf. §184). Both of

these were priestly tasks, "offering Himself without blemish unto God." Hence His priestly work did not begin with His being arrested by the Sanhedrin and was not that of the passion week only, it began with His birth with respect to both passive and active obedience.

Through this twofold obedience Christ has:

a) fulfilled the double demand of atonement (§184),
b) merited what is necessary for the two parts of salvation (§197),
c) merited what is necessary for the two parts of justification (§440).

With respect to the first, He has through His passive obedience borne the threatened punishment and through His active obedience He fulfilled the demand: "this do and thou shalt live." With respect to the second, He has through His passive obedience delivered us from the greatest evil and through His active obedience brought us to the highest good. And with respect to the third, we can now be acquitted from guilt and punishment on the ground of His passive obedience, and be given the right to eternal life on the ground of His active obedience. Through this twofold obedience the demands of the Covenant of Works are fully complied with, and He is a Jesus who "is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him," Hebr. 7:25.

210. **For whom Christ has thus Sacrificed Himself.**—Christ has sacrificed Himself and merited this twofold obedience for the ones who have been given Him by the Father, for the elect and for them alone. In addition to texts such as John 10: 11, 15; 17:9, where the Lord Himself says that He gives His life for His sheep, and that as priest He prays not for the world but for those whom the Father had given Him, it is especially evident from Romans 5:10 and 8:32.

> Rom. 5:10, For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.
>
> Rom. 8:32, He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?

If in these two texts the words "we" and "us all" are to be taken as meaning all mankind, then they would contain the positive statement that now "much more" all mankind shall be saved. But the Scriptures teach plainly that this is not true, and consequently that these words do not mean all mankind. Both texts teach that if salvation has been merited by Christ for any one person, he shall certainly receive it, and therefore that salvation has only been merited for those who will really share it, i. e. for the elect.

211. **The Theory of Universal Atonement.**—The Arminian teaching with regard to this point differs greatly from ours. According to them Christ died for all; He has atoned before God for all and has brought about reconciliation between God and all men. Closely related to this is their doctrine of the "free will" (Cf. §176). Christ has procured salvation for all mankind, and that was all that was necessary for redemption, for man himself has a free will to choose the good: he has the ability to come of himself to true repentance, to true belief in the Gospel and to the appropriation of salvation. The fact that not all are saved, even though salvation is merited for all, is due to the unwillingness of many to repent and to believe. This is the doctrine of universal atonement. For this teaching they appeal to such texts as John 4:42; 1 John 4:14, where Christ is called the Savior of the world; John 1:29, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world; 1 John 2:2, And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world; etc. The word "world," however, is used in the Scriptures in different senses, and not infrequently is it used to show that salvation in Christ is not only for the Jews but for the heathen as well; "world" then means the Gentile world in contradistinction of Israel. In the texts just mentioned that word cannot mean all men, for to affirm this is to make Scripture contradict itself; contradict itself not only in regard to the texts mentioned in the preceding paragraph, but also in regard to all that it teaches concerning predestination and the spiritual impotence of man. All this teaching is Scriptural evidence that the atonement of Christ was not an atonement for all mankind, but an atonement only for the elect, or in other words, that the atonement is not universal but particular.

It is true that the Catechism says that Christ "sustained the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind" (Qu. 37), but with these words it does not mean to teach universal atonement. For there the question is not for whom but what Christ has suffered, and the redemption of but one person would also have demanded sustaining the undivided wrath of God against the sins of all mankind. This is the reason that the atonement, as far as its worth is concerned, would be sufficient for all men.

And it is also true that benefits flow from Christ's work of redemption which all men enjoy, i. e. those of common grace; that the Gospel offer of salvation is universal; and that the Scriptures teach with emphasis that not man's lost condition in Adam but his unbelief will be the cause of his damnation, but all this is not what the doctrine of universal atonement stands for. The matter concerned here is the divine intention as to the effect of the merits of Christ. The doctrine of universal atonement affirms that, since the offer of salvation is for all men, also the merits

of Christ must have been intended by God to be for all men, so that Christ died for all, and through His satisfaction God has been reconciled to all. Thus we see that the doctrine is really an effort to harmonize the hidden and the revealed things, election and Gospel. Instead of accepting both as taught in the Scriptures, this doctrine rejects particular atonement together with predestination, because the universal offer of salvation seems to require such (Cf. §§63-65, 96, 321).

The Arminian doctrine of universal atonement, therefore says: God intended that the atonement of Christ should bring peace to all, that through His stripes all should be healed, and if in spite of this many are lost, it is because through their unbelief they render the intention of God idle in so far as it concerns them. The Reformed doctrine of particular atonement, on the contrary, holds on the basis of the Word of God, that, as the eternal counsel of God can never be rendered void, the divine intention in that counsel must have been the same as the actual outcome; so that, as only part of the human race is saved, the atonement must have been particular, viz. for the elect. They are the ones who by His stripes were to be saved.

Almost the entire American Church life is affected by this doctrine of universal atonement. In religious literature, hymns, and especially in revival movements this teaching reveals itself almost without exception. In this sense the expressions are meant which are so often used to urge sinners to accept Christ as their Savior: "Christ loves you," "Christ died for you." We do not object to speaking of God's love for sinners. For when He says that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; when through His ambassadors He beseeches sinners to be reconciled to Him; when the Savior weeps over Jerusalem, and says: how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings—what is that but love? But when we speak of the love of God for sinners, we do so according to God's revealed counsel, leaving the things of His secret counsel for the Lord our God.

212. **The Vicarious Suffering of Christ and Election.**—That Christ could suffer and die, not only for the sake of, but in place of His people, and thus atone for them, was possible only through election. Even human law, although it does permit that one pay for the other in money matters, will not permit the suffering of one for the other in cases of moral guilt. It insists that the guilty one shall bear the punishment. And this is also the demand of the divine law: the soul that sinneth, it shall die, Ezek. 18:4, 20. Through election, however, the atonement of Christ was in full accord with this demand. For it was an election in Him, Eph. 1:4,

a deed, therefore, in virtue of which the elect were from eternity one with Christ, they one with Him as His body, He one with them as their Head. Thus His suffering and dying for the body of the elect was not a suffering and dying for another, but for His own body. The possibility, therefore, of a vicarious suffering and dying of Christ stands or falls with election. We admit both, the Pelagians deny both.

213. **The Offer of Salvation Universal.**—When the Scriptures teach that Christ died for the elect alone, it may not be concluded that the Gospel, as an offer of salvation, also concerns the elect alone, for this involves an encroachment upon the revealed things for the sake of the hidden things, contrary to the admonition of Deut. 29:29. This point will be discussed in greater detail in connection with election (§§316-322).

CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE

214. **The Kingly Office.**—A king is an office bearer who has received from God the task of ruling and protecting a certain group of subjects, with the right of doing this in God's stead, in His name. Every king and every government, that of a republic as well, rules "by the grace of God." The revolutionary spirit mocks with this expression, as if it meant a special privilege for kings, received from God, to rule over a certain group of people according to their own caprice, but that is not its meaning. It is intended to express consciousness on the part of rulers of the truth of Rom. 13:1, "there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God." This implies, however, that these powers are "ministers of God," Rom. 13:4, so that they must rule according to the ordinances of God and shall have to give an account of themselves to Him. To deny that the government reigns "by the grace of God" is to deny the dominion and sovereignty of God, as the revolutionary spirit actually does.

> Rom. 13:1, 2, 4, Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that does evil.

215. **Proofs that Christ is King.**—To prove that Christ is King we can again refer to the two facts: a) that it is expressly stated by calling Him such, Ps. 2:6; and by Christ's declaring Himself to be a King before Pilate, John 18:37; and b) that He does everything which belongs to the work of a king; for He reigns as king,

1 Cor. 15:25, and protects His people as king, Matt. 28:20; John 10:28. He also wages a royal struggle with His enemies which shall last until the Kingdom of God shall have won a complete victory and all things shall be put under His feet, 1 Cor. 15:25.

Ps. 2:6, Yet I have set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.
John 18:37, Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king.
Matt. 28:20, And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.
1 Cor. 15:25, For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet.

216. **Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom.**—Christ's Kingdom, i. e. not the Kingdom which He had in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit from eternity, but the Kingdom which was given Him as Mediator, is to be distinguished in a general Kingdom, in which God through Him rules all things, Matt. 28:18, and a special Kingdom in which He is the absolute King over His Church, Luke 1:33.

When it is said in 1 Cor. 15:24 that He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power, it is the first, the general Kingdom, that is meant. His work as Mediator is not to be limited to the saving of sinners alone, for as Mediator He has received the comprehensive task of restoring to perfection and glory the Kingdom of God which was founded in the beginning and which was disturbed by sin. And when He shall have completed this task by destroying all inimical power, then He will deliver that restored Kingdom to God.

His special Kingdom, however, over the Church which He purchased with His blood, shall remain His through eternity. This Kingdom as it exists here on earth is called the realm of grace; and as it shall exist in a perfect state, the realm of glory.

The general Kingdom of Christ is of great importance for the special Kingdom, since thereby He has full power and authority to protect His special Kingdom against all enemies, and to cause all things to work together for good in its behalf.

Matt. 28:18, And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth.
Luke 1:33, And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

217. **Christ's Rule over His Church.**—Christ rules His Special Kingdom partly immediately and partly mediately.

He rules it immediately by means of His Word, in which He has set down His ordinances, and through His Spirit which teaches the Church to understand and follow these ordinances.

He rules it mediately through the ruling office in the Church,

the office of elders, Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; Hebr. 13:17. As servants of Christ the elders must always rule in such a way that the absolute authority of Christ is not in the least encroached upon. They may not put themselves in His place. For that reason it is said that their power is not a ruling but a "ministering" power. This, however, must not be misunderstood. It is a ministering power in regard to Christ, not in regard to the Church. Before Christ the elders are nothing but servants, so that they have to execute their power in strict accordance with His ordinances, but over the Church they certainly have ruling power, as is apparent from the texts just mentioned. They have to serve Christ by ruling the Church in accordance with His will.

Acts 20:28, Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which He purchased with His own blood.

1 Tim. 5:17, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.

Hebr. 13:17, Obey them that have rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.

218. **Each of these Three Offices Necessary.**—Each of these offices was absolutely necessary for the work of redemption. In regard to Christ's priestly and kingly offices this is very evident, but it is also true in regard to His prophetical office. If it were the will of God to apply salvation to the elect independently of any action on their part, as if they were mere objects, then it would not be possible to see any necessity for the prophetical office. But that is not the will of God. That would be a denial of His own work. He applies salvation to the elect in such a way that they are treated as human beings, persons. Hence the demand of conscious, volitive acts on the part of men, the demand that they believe, even though faith is a gift of God; the demand that they accept salvation and appropriate it to themselves, so that participation in salvation is declared to depend decidedly upon accepting and appropriating it, Mark 16:16; John 1:12; 3:36; Rev. 3:20; etc. For this reason the Prophetical office is absolutely necessary. For: How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? Rom. 10:14.

Mark 16:15, 16, And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned..

John 1:11, 12, He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name.

John 3:36, He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The three offices were necessary:

a) in order that the work of redemption might be complete. To that end salvation must be procured, imparted, and preached; procured as priest, imparted as king, preached as prophet;

b) in order to deliver us from our misery; from our guilt as priest, from the power of sin as king, from our ignorance and blindness as prophet;

c) in order to restore in us the image of God: the knowledge of that image as prophet, its righteousness as priest, its holiness as king.

4. The States of the Mediator

219. **Two States.**—Finally with respect to the Mediator after He became man, mention is to be made of a twofold state: a State of Humiliation, and a State of Exaltation.

220. **Meaning of "State."**—One of the different meanings of the word "state" is that of the legal relation of a person, his relation to the law. In this sense it is used when we speak of the "states" of the Mediator.

A person's relation to the law can be either a relation of being or a relation of not being in agreement with the law. In the former case his state is a state of righteousness, and in the latter case his state is a state of guilt. While burdened with the sin and guilt of His people, Christ was as our Substitute in disagreement with the law or in a state of guilt. After His resurrection, however, after He had fulfilled all the demands of the divine law by active and passive obedience His state was the state of righteousness.

A state brings with it a corresponding condition; unrighteousness goes together with misery and righteousness with felicity. So also with Christ. In His state of guilt His condition was a condition of humiliation and suffering, and in His state of righteousness His condition is one of exaltation and glory. State and condition, therefore, are closely related to one another; we may say the condition is the visible side of the state. This is perhaps the reason why the states are named according to the conditions in which they become manifest. We speak not of Christ's state of guilt but of His state of humiliation, and not of His state of righteousness but of His state of exaltation.

221. **The Necessity of Both these States.**—It is evident that each of the two states was no less necessary for the fulfillment of the task of the Mediator than was each of His two natures or each of His three offices. He could procure salvation in no other way than by taking upon Himself the burden of our guilt and punish-

ment, thus placing Himself in a state of guilt with a condition of humiliation. And it required a state of righteousness with a condition of exaltation, of an exaltation far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, Eph. 1:21, an exaltation of having all authority in heaven and on earth, Matt. 28:18, to be able to dispose of His merits in giving eternal life to those whom the Father had given Him, and to complete the victory of Golgotha in the destruction of the power of hell, in the restoration of the general Kingdom of God, and in the upbuilding of His special Kingdom.

THE STATE OF HUMILIATION

222. **The Degrees of the State of Humiliation.**—We speak of "degrees" in the state of humiliation, for it was as by degrees that Christ descended ever deeper into the abyss of our misery. There were five such degrees:

1. Incarnation,
2. Suffering,
3. Death,
4. Burial, and
5. Descent into hell.

223. **The Incarnation.**—The first degree was the incarnation, the taking on of the human nature in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8:3, born of woman, born under the law, Gal. 4:4.

Although it is not a humiliation for the Mediator to possess a human nature in His present state of exaltation, since His human nature is now in the highest degree glorified, still the incarnation was indeed a humiliation. For it was the acceptance of a humiliated, sin-degraded nature, of the form of a servant, Phil. 2:7; it was an incarnation in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8:3, and under circumstances of the deepest poverty and deprivation. It was a becoming man not even in a condition as that of Adam before the fall, but far below. "Adam was created a man grown, but Christ was conceived by Mary and born a helpless babe. When Adam came everything had been prepared for him; but when Christ came upon earth, no one had expected Him and there was not even a place for Him in the inn. Adam came to reign and to subject all the earth to himself; Christ came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Bavinck).

The Anabaptists and the Mennonites deny that Christ took flesh and blood from the virgin Mary. According to them Christ brought His human nature with Him from heaven. As if sin were something material, they declare that the human nature of Christ could not have been holy if He took flesh and blood from Mary. This, of course, is an error. Moreover, it was necessary

to assume flesh and blood from Mary in order that He might belong to our race and thus could be our Substitute.

His holy conception and birth, as well as His thirty years stay under the parental roof at Nazareth, belongs to His work as our Substitute and has direct significance for our salvation. Thus He "with innocence and perfect holiness covers in the sight of God my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth" (Catechism, Qu. 36). To cover us with His righteousness Christ had to live holily through the same human life we live sinfully.

224. **Suffering.**—The second degree of humiliation was the suffering which lasted from the manger to the cross.

The suffering before His capture consisted in all the humiliation of poverty and deprivation, already at His birth and throughout His entire life upon earth, Luke 9:58, 2 Cor. 8:9; in the hatred and scorn, the rejection and persecution which came to Him from "His own," John 1:11, and in His very dwelling upon this earth, which lies in wickedness, for how painful it must have been for Him, the holy One from heaven to dwell in the midst of impurity and abomination. In all this did He bear the burden of the wrath of God against sin.

The greatest suffering occurred in Gethsemane and thereafter until the time of His death upon the cross, especially during the three hours of darkness.

The Lord suffered not only in body but also in soul, Matt. 26:38; 27:46. For since sin had been committed in both soul and body, the punishment must needs be borne in both soul and body.

It was not the divine nature that suffered but the human, for the latter alone was capable of suffering. This, however, does not mean that the divine nature had nothing to do with the suffering. The divine nature did strengthen the human to its task and enabled it to sustain the burden of God's wrath against sin in infinite severity (Cf. §194).

In the Apostolic Creed we find the phrase "suffered under Pontius Pilate," and this "under Pontius Pilate" is very significant. The judgment seat of Pilate was that of the legal civil justice, the servant of God, Rom. 13:4. And although Pilate did grievous injustice and did it knowingly, nevertheless the sentence which he imposed was one given in God's stead. By Pilate the Savior was officially and formally condemned to death on behalf of God Himself. God Himself through Pilate pronounced that sentence because of our sin which Christ had taken upon Himself. This divine act of condemning Christ to death for our sin was at the same time an act of accepting Him as our Substitute, and of accepting His sacrifice as one that would satisfy the demands of divine justice against us, as otherwise there would have been no divine

right to condemn the innocent Mediator. For that reason the official and formal condemnation of Christ by God Himself through Pilate was at the same time an official and formal acquittal of us, by which God "freed us from His severe judgment to which we were exposed" (Catechism, Qu. 38).

> Luke 9:58, And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.
>
> 2 Cor. 8:9, For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich.
>
> Matt. 26:38, Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide ye here, and watch with Me.

225. **Death.**—The death of the Mediator was the death of the cross. And it was necessary that He die this death. His death must be a death with shedding of blood, Hebr. 9:22, without breaking of bones, John 19:36, and upon which a burial could follow. The forms of capital punishment practiced by the Jews (stoning or hanging, with or without the burning of the body) did not comply with these demands, whereas crucifixion, one of the Roman forms of putting to death, did.

Especially was it necessary that the Lord die this death, since it was a shameful, an extremely painful, and an accursed death. It was a shameful death, since only such as were of the lowest, most despised class of people were punished with it; one who died upon the cross was regarded unworthy of even sympathy or of burial. It was an extremely painful death since the loss of blood was very small; it was a slow torture until the victim succumbed to the unbearable sufferings. It was an accursed death for God Himself had attached that significance to it, Gal. 3:13; one on the cross, hanging between heaven and earth and perishing there was the very picture of one accursed, one banished, one wanted neither in heaven nor upon earth. With such a shameful death the Mediator had to bear the shame, with such a painful death He had to bear the misery, with such an accursed death He had to bear the curse of sin.

The death which Christ as Surety had to suffer was death in its final issue, and therefore not only a physical death, a separation of soul and body, but also a death which for man is eternal death, the separation from God, from His favor and communion, to be a prey of all evil, of extreme misery. This, however, is regarded as belonging to the Descent into Hell.

In the physical death soul and body, the two parts of Christ's human nature, were separated; in bearing the wrath of God His human nature was separated from God, but the divine and the human natures of the Mediator were never separated.

Hebr. 9:22, And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.

John 19:36, For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.

Gal. 3:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

226. **The Burial.**—The burial was the fourth degree of humiliation, for it was a descent into the grave, which has as its task the completion of our sentence: "For dust art thou, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. 3:19. The descent into the grave showed how completely He was in the power of death; He not only died, but was even buried; death reigned over Him completely until the third day.

That the burial is indeed to be regarded as a proof that He was really dead, is evident from the fact that, since the death upon the cross was a form of capital punishment, permission to take the body from the cross and to bury it could not be given until it was clearly shown that He was dead. Pilate took special care to assure himself of His death, Mark 15:44, and the soldiers made death certain by means of a spear thrust, even though they saw that He was already dead, John 19:33, 34. Otherwise the suspicion that it was only a case of suspended animation and subsequent reviving would not have been excluded. And the certainty of His death is at the same time a proof of the certainty of His resurrection.

The body of the Lord did not see corruption in the grave, Acts 2:27, 31, not even a beginning of the process of disintegration took place. With His death the price had been paid, and although death held Him momentarily in its power, its power was broken for it had received its due, and it was not allowed further effect upon His body in any way. Some writers have considered the fact mentioned by John, that from the wound inflicted upon the already lifeless body there flowed not only water but blood as well, John 19:32-34, as a manifestation that in the grave Christ has seen no corruption, as it showed that in the dead body of Jesus there was no coagulation of the blood, which is the first beginning of corruption, but that it retained its liquid form as in life.

In connection with these things it is noteworthy that certain details of the burial appear to be elements of exaltation. All reviling, mockery, abuse now cease. He is buried, not by His poor disciples, but by the nobles of the people and in a royal manner, even in a new tomb in the garden of Joseph. That the grave was new is not simply mentioned, but attention is called to it by the added words: "where never man had yet lain," Luke 23:53, evidently to point to that fact as an honor bestowed on Christ by

divine Providence. Since only that which was new (cf. Luke 19:30) was deemed worthy of being used for a holy purpose, even among the heathen, 1 Sam. 6:7, 8, only a new grave was worthy to be the resting place of the body of the blessed Savior. Thus in the Providence of God he whose grave they had made with the wicked, was with the rich in His death, Is. 53:9.

> Mark 15:44, And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead.
>
> John 19:32-34, The soldiers therefore came, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him; but when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs; howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and straightway there came out blood and water.
>
> Acts 2:27, Because Thou wilt not leave My soul unto Hades, neither wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption. . . . . v. 31, He foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was He left unto Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

227. **The Descent into Hell.**—The article of the Apostolic Creed, "He descended into hell," is taken by the Reformed to mean the hellish anguish which Christ suffered under the burden of the infinite wrath of God against sin, the anguish which found expression in the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Since bearing the burden of the wrath of God in infinite severity could be necessary but once, the fearful soul-suffering at Gethsemane must have had another significance. The cause of the suffering in the garden was evidently a last, most fearful attack on the part of the powers of darkness. Of this suffering mention is made in Hebr. 5:7-9. In that passage it is stated that here the Savior "though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered," words which indicate that His subjection to the will of the Father was here put to its severest test, and that His: "not Mine, but Thy will, be done" was the crowning act of His active obedience, by which it was "made perfect," at the same time making it manifest that He was the Lamb without blemish, Exod. 12:5, worthy to be accepted as sacrifice.

The original significance of "descended into hell" seems to have been "descended into the grave," the same, therefore, as the burial. Of the Ecumenical Symbols (Cf. §45) the Nicaean Confession speaks only of "buried," and the Athanasian Creed only of "descended into hell," whereas in the Apostolic Creed both expressions are found. This insertion of the phrase "descended into hell" after "buried" made it necessary to look for a meaning different from that of "buried." The view which found favor with the Roman Church and which it still holds, is that Christ after death descended into the "limbus patrum." This limbus patrum is considered to be a place in the realm of the dead where the saints of

the Old Testament were confined (Cf. § 492), because after Adam's fall the entrance to heaven had been closed. Through the death of Christ, however, the entrance to heaven was opened again, and now Christ descended to this limbus patrum to lead the Old Testament saints in triumph to the realms of glory.

The Reformers could not agree with this view. The Reformed Churches attached to the phrase the meaning already mentioned, whereas the Lutherans taught that Christ after His death descended into hell to triumph over the powers of darkness and announce them their doom.

In more recent times another conception had found favor with many of various religious persuasions. It teaches that the descent into hell is to be regarded as a descent into the realm of the dead to preach the Gospel to the dead and to save them that repent and believe. This is thought to be the teaching of 1 Pet. 3:19, 20. The meaning of this passage is not clear, but so much is evident, that Peter is speaking of things which Christ did "in the days of Noah," and with this in view the most natural explanation seems to be that Christ in that time through Noah has preached to those who were then living on earth, but are now "spirits in prison." Moreover, it is not safe to make an obscure passage the basis of a doctrine, and that a doctrine in conflict with the plain teaching of other texts. Scripture never speaks of a possibility to be saved after death, but gives very decidedly to understand that every one will receive according to the things done in the body, 2 Cor. 5:10 (Cf. §495).

Furthermore the Scriptures teach that, while the body of the Lord was in the grave, His soul was in heaven; for He commended His spirit into the hands of the Father, Luke 23:46, and said to the malefactor: Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise, Luke 23:43. This excludes every conception of the descent into hell which teaches that the soul of Christ was anywhere else than in heaven.

Hebr. 5:7-9, Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation.

1 Pet. 3:19, 20, In which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

THE STATE OF EXALTATION

228. **The Degrees of the State of Exaltation.**—For the same reason as in the case of the state of humiliation, do we with respect

to the state of exaltation speak of "degrees." And in the state of exaltation we distinguish four degrees:

1. The Resurrection,
2. The Ascension,
3. The Sitting at the Right Hand of God, and
4. The Second Coming.

229. **The Resurrection.**—The resurrection was a returning to life of the human nature, a reunion of soul and body, but it was not that only. With the resurrection the Mediator entered into the state of righteousness, and therefore into a condition of glorification. It was a resurrection not only with a revived but also with a glorified human nature, although this glory remained concealed until the time of the ascension. This was necessary since otherwise all association with the apostles during the forty days would have been impossible, for when the Lord appeared in heavenly glory to John on Patmos, the latter fell before His feet as dead, Rev. 1:7.

It is called a being "raised up," Acts 2:24, and a being "risen," Luke 24:6. It was a rising as a deed of Himself by His own power, John 10:17, 18, and as such a proof of His being truly God, Rom. 1:4; for it is impossible for a creature to rise from death by his own power. And it was a being raised up as an act of the Father, and as such it was a proof that He had paid the debt to the last farthing, for otherwise the Father could not have released Him from the captivity into which as Surety for our sins He had been delivered. As He was "delivered up for our trespasses," so He was "raised up for our justification," Rom. 4:25.

Viewed in connection with the work of redemption which had preceded it, the resurrection was the consummation thereof. The Scriptures declare that without it all else would have been in vain, so that our faith would have been in vain and we would still be in our sins, 1 Cor. 15:17. Then there would have been no living Mediator and Savior to make us participants in the salvation which He had merited, for as a point of justice only the very same personality that had merited salvation could have the right to impart it. Saving faith must include the belief from the heart that God raised Christ from the dead, Rom. 10:9.

As a special fruit of the resurrection must be mentioned the benefit that the believer has in it the assurance of his own blessed resurrection, for "if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection," Rom. 6:5. In principle believers are already raised with Christ and set together with Him in heavenly places, Eph. 2:6.

John 10:17, 18, Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but

I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from My Father.

Rom. 1:4, Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Cor. 15:17, And if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Rom. 10:9, Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

230. **The Ascension.**—The ascension of the Lord was His passing up from earth to heaven, His leaving the world and going unto the Father, John 16:28.

The Lutherans interpret the ascension not as a change of place but as a change of condition, a becoming omnipresent on the part of the human nature by virtue of its union with the divine (Cf. §192). According to them it was by no means a departure from earth, for it was necessary that Christ remained on earth, not only as to His divine but also as to His human nature, as otherwise there could be no bodily presence of Him in bread and wine in Communion. This they take to be the meaning of the promise: And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the earth, Matt. 28:20.

Over against this Lutheran notion the Reformed have placed the view that the Lord ascended to heaven "truly, visibly, and locally." a) Truly, as truly an ascention, an ascension in the literal sense of the word, which according to the Lutherans it was not but only a semblance of it. It was a "being taken up," Acts 1:11, an "ascending up," Eph. 4:8. b) Visibly, as it was witnessed by the Apostles. He was taken up "as they were looking;" while He ascended "they were looking steadfastly into heaven," the angels asked them: "Why stand ye looking into heaven?" Acts 1:9-11. c) Locally, as it was a departure from one place (the earth) and a going to another (heaven), actually a change of place. The Lord Himself spoke of it as a "leaving the world" and a "going unto the Father," John 16:28.

Of the ascension the chief points of significance for salvation are the following: a) That it was a departure for the capital of His Kingdom to enter upon His royal dominion; b) That it was an entrance into the Sanctuary through His blood as High priest to receive the benefits which were promised for the work of redemption, and to distribute them, Hebr. 9:11, 12; c) That it was a departure from His own to send them a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, in His stead, John 16:7; d) That it was a departure for our Father's House to prepare a place for us, John 14:2.

Hebr. 9:11, 12, But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with

hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

John 16:7, Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you.

John 14:2, In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

231. **The Sitting at the Right Hand of God.**—By the sitting at the right hand of God is meant the exaltation of the Mediator to the greatest power and dominion, as the King by whom the Father rules all things. The expression "sitting at the right hand of God" is used in a figurative sense, and is derived from the Oriental custom of placing royal governors at the right hand of the king. The place at the right hand was ever the place of honor.

The sitting at the right hand of God also has a rich significance. This exaltation the Father granted the Mediator: a) As a reward for His mediatorial labors, Phil. 2:9, 10; b) In order that He might be to the Church a Head over all things, Eph. 1:20b-22; c) In order that, equipped with all power in heaven and earth, He might restore God's Kingdom, 1 Cor. 15:25, and bring to completion His own special Kingdom. Through His sitting at the right hand of the Father we have an Intercessor at the heavenly Court, Rom. 8:34, an Advocate with the Father, 1 John 2:1.

Phil. 2:9, 10, Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth.

Eph. 1:20b-22, And made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church.

1 Cor. 15:25, For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet.

Rom. 8:34b, Who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

1 John 2:1, My little children, these things write I unto thou that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

232. **The Second Coming.**—The Second Coming of Christ will be the last and highest stage in the exaltation of the Mediator, when He, before the eyes of all, will appear in glory to be the judge of all and to determine with absolute authority and sovereignty the fate of all. It will take place at the end of time.

This coming of the Lord will also be a most glorious significance for all those who "have loved His appearance." Then, by the destruction of all enemies and the powers of evil, by the resurrection and public justification of the saints, and their being taken

into glory, will the work of redemption be completed and the marriage supper of the Lamb begin.

The second coming is further discussed in the Doctrine of the Consummation of the World (§497 sq.).

FOURTH PART

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE

INTRODUCTION

233. **Why there is a Dispensation of Grace.**—The answer to the question why there is a dispensation of grace, can only be found in the fact, to which we have referred more than once, that grace is not applied to the elect as if they were mere inanimate objects, but as persons. If it had pleased the Lord to save the elect as if they were mere objects, then it would have been through an act of application which happened independent of them, and there would have been no dispensation of grace. But it did not please the Lord to do so; that is why there is a dispensation of grace with all what belongs to it. For that reason a Covenant of Grace was made, to lead the elect to salvation in a covenantal way. With this Covenant the visible Church was called into being, to serve as the institution of salvation, and the Means of Grace were given. Through the ministration of the means of Grace, which was entrusted to it, the Church had to labor for the perfection of the saints and the salvation of that which was lost. And the preachers of the Gospel, as if to impress upon their hearts the great seriousness of this task, are even charged to beseech sinners on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God, 2 Cor. 5:20, yea, to constrain them to come in, Luke 14:23.

From this it follows that we would approach the doctrine of the dispensation of grace from the wrong point of view if we would regard it from the divine standpoint, in this sense that we would consider everything here as to be combined with and subjected to predestination. It is certain that everything pertaining to the dispensation of grace has its origin in God; otherwise it would be of no avail. Here also all things are "of Him, and through Him, and unto Him." But we must not forget that these things are of a twofold nature; that besides the hidden things which "belong unto Jehovah our God," there are revealed things, which are said, in contradistinction to the hidden things, to "belong unto us and to our children." In decreeing and establishing the re-

vealed things, in decreeing and establishing the things of the dispensation of grace, the Lord has intended them for us and for our children, has therefore adapted them for us and for our children, has made them to correspond with our needs, with what we are, with what He made us, with our being men, responsible beings. In decreeing and establishing these things the Lord God has, so to say, placed Himself on our standpoint, so that, to see them as God sees them, to see them as they really are, we also have to view them from our standpoint.

It is very remarkable that when the Lord Himself performed prophetical work, He did not subject His dealing with men to predestination. Cain was a reprobate; his name was not in the book of life; it was even decreed in God's eternal counsel that he should be the murderer of his brother. Yet the Lord labors with him with promise, admonition, and warning to save him, just as if no such decree concerning him had been made, Gen. 4:5-7. With Jeroboam He deals in the same way, 1 Kings 11:38. The Savior labored with Jerusalem and her children as if He would frustrate God's decree concerning them, and with tears did He express His sorrow because of the fact that His labor did not bear the desired fruits, Luke 19:41, 42. Only when we permit ourselves to be taught by these divine instances, shall we treat the doctrine of the dispensation of grace in a manner which may not be entirely satisfactory as far as our logic is concerned, but which is in agreement with the Word of God. Hence, especially in this part of the doctrine of salvation, as the part that more than any other concerns God's way of dealing with man, we must heed the warning of Deut. 29:29: The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law. This word is God's word, which is to be obeyed whether our way of thinking considers it logical or not.

234. **Contents of this Part.**—In this Part the Church and the Means of Grace are to be treated (Ecclesiology), but in addition to these subjects we intend to treat here also the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace.

To give the Covenant of Grace a place in this ecclesiological Part of the Doctrine of faith is rather a deviation from the usual way. In regard to this Covenant there is difference of opinion, and naturally the conception one has of it determines what he thinks to be the proper place in his system of Theology. As a rule we find the Covenant of Grace treated in connection with the doctrine of the Mediator in consequence of the idea that it is wholly or to a great extent identical with the Covenant of Redemption or the Counsel of Peace (Cf. §111), and therefore established with the Mediator.

This conception, however, is as it seems to us, and we hope to show, not in accordance with our Confessional Standards. As presented by these standards it is a Covenant not for the sake of acquiring of salvation, like that of redemption, but for the sake of imparting salvation (Cf. §§237, 238, 249, 257), a Covenant therefore essentially different from the Counsel of Peace, and to be treated here in this Part as a subdivision of the doctrine of the Dispensation of Grace.

All the more is this to be considered the proper place since the Covenant of Grace and the Church are most closely related to one another, especially in regard to the origin and the task of the Church. In regard to the origin of the Church it was taught by Calvin, that Abraham was "the father of the Church in so far as the covenant of life rested in him," that the Church "had its beginning in him," "was begotten in him," and it is said of Calvin that he "continually brought the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace in connection with the doctrine of the Church" 1). And in regard to its task all agree that the Church has for its task the administration of the Covenant of Grace.

That they are closely related to the Covenant of Grace is equally true of the Means of Grace: Word and Sacraments. By means of grace only those are meant that are essential elements of the Covenant of Grace, the Word of God as the Word of the Covenant, the Book of the Covenant (Old and New Testament), unfolding the promise of the Covenant, and the Sacraments as the signs and seals of the Covenant. The Covenant of Grace, therefore, will exert a dominating influence on the whole of this Part of the doctrine of faith.

Consequently the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace will be the subject of our first, the doctrine of the Church that of our second, and the doctrine of the Means of Grace that of our third chapter.

1. The Covenant of Grace

235. **Three Covenants.**—In agreement with the Word of God we must distinguish three covenants for the salvation of man: the Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace. The first we have treated in connection with the Decrees of God, the second in connection with the State of Integrity. The third still demands our attention.

236. **The Covenant of Grace to be distinguished from the Covenant of Redemption.**—That the Covenant of Grace and that of Redemption are not one and the same, but two Covenants, differing essentially from one another, appears conclusively from the following considerations:

1) Dr. W. van den Berg, Calvijn over het Genadeverbond, pp. 24, 26.

1. First, there is a difference as to the parties. In the Covenant of Redemption (or the Counsel of Peace) the divine Persons are the Parties to the Covenant, the Father being the first, and the Son the second Party. But in the Covenant of Grace the Triune God is the first, and the believers and their seed are the second party. In this Covenant Christ is not the second Party overagainst the Father, but with the Father and the Holy Spirit He is first party, overagainst us as second party. For:

a) In Gen. 17:7 there are expressly mentioned as parties to the Covenant: God and Abraham and his seed, his natural seed. The words: And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and their seed after thee throughout their generations, absolutely forbid to present this Covenant as established between God the Father as the first, and God the Son as the second Party.

b) In Hebr. 9:16 Christ is called "Him that made" the Testament or Covenant, i. e., the first Party, whereas in Hebr. 1:2 and Rom. 8:17 He is called "Heir," i. e. second Party, and since it is impossible to be both first and second party in one covenant, it follows that in these texts entirely different covenants are referred to: one in which Christ is co-Testator, and the other in which He is Heir.

c) Baptism is a sign of the Covenant, expressive of the nature of the Covenant; a sign given by the first Party of the Covenant to the second party of that which the Covenant will mean for him. This sign is administered to us, not in the name of the Father only, but in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, indicating that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the first Party of the Covenant, and that we are the second party.

d) So also it is evidently understood in our liturgical Form for the Administration of Baptism. In this Form no trace is to be found of placing the Father and the Son overagainst one another as first and second Parties, but throughout the whole Form the Triune God is presented as the first Party overagainst "we and our children" as the second party; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit binding themselves to us and our children to be our Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier.

2. Secondly, there is a difference as to the time of their being established. The Covenant of Redemption was established in eternity, whereas the Covenant of Grace was established in time, Gen. 17. To contend that the establishing of the Covenant with Abraham is to be regarded as only a revelation to Abraham of the Covenant that had been made in eternity with Christ, is to contradict the plain language of Scripture. And throughout the

Scriptures, in Exod. 2:24; Deut. 8:18; 2 Kings 13:23; Luke 1:72, 73; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:17, the Covenant of Grace is spoken of as established in time with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

3. Thirdly, there is a difference as to the character of both. For:

a) The Covenant of Redemption had in Christ a representing covenant-Head, even as the Covenant of Works had a representing covenant-head in Adam, Rom. 5:12-19. The Covenant of Grace, on the contrary, has no representing covenant-head, who acts and decides for all the covenant members, but, as the Word of God plainly teaches, accepting and keeping or breaking the Covenant of Grace is for each covenant member a personal matter.

b) Scripture teaches us again and again that the Covenant of Grace can be broken (Cf. §242). Already at the very beginning, when the Covenant of Grace was being established, this was clearly stated, and the provision made that such as had broken the Covenant must be "cut off from his people," Gen. 17:14. With the Covenant of Redemption, on the contrary, there can be no covenant breaking. All those who are partakers of that Covenant will surely be saved. Christ, their Covenant-Head, who has perfectly satisfied for them all its conditions, shall give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of His hand, John 10:28. The Covenant of Redemption belongs to the hidden things, to the eternal decrees of God which shall stand forever; but the Covenant of Grace belongs to the revealed things, to the will of His command which is not done on earth as it is in heaven.

4. Finally, there is a difference as to the purpose of both. As has been said, The Covenant of Redemption was a Covenant for the sake of acquiring, and that of Grace is a Covenant for the sake of imparting salvation, for the sake of leading the elect to salvation in a way which is in agreement to their being created in the image of God. As such both are intimately related to one another. The Covenant of Grace is to serve as a means for the execution of the Covenant of Redemption, but Covenants thus related must be different Covenants.

237. **Description of the Covenant of Grace.**—The Covenant of Grace is that special institution for the salvation of man in which the Triune God binds Himself with a covenant and an oath to the believers and their seed, to be their God: their Father, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier, and binds them to Himself to be His own and to serve Him, thus insuring their salvation, unless they break the Covenant by unbelief and disobedience, Gen. 17:7, Hebr. 3:18, 19.

Expressed very briefly, the Covenant of Grace is: the promise of salvation in the form of a covenant. This brief definition is sub-

stantiated by the fact that every Covenant of God with man is actually a promise given in the stronger, the more binding form of a covenant. The Covenant of Works was a promise of life in the way of obedience, given in the form of a Covenant. Similarly the Covenant with Noah was a promise never again to destroy the earth through water, given in the form of a Covenant. And of the Covenant with Abraham the same is true. Its promise was the salvatory promise, virtually the same as the "mother-promise" of Paradise, the promise to be a God unto him and his seed, and this promise was now given in the form of a Covenant. For this reason in Gen. 17:7 as well as in Gen. 9:11 the promise itself is called the Covenant. The same is done in the New Testament in places as Acts 2:39; 13:32; 26:6; Rom. 4:13, 14, 16; 15:8; Gal. 3:16, 17, 18, 21, 29; Hebr. 6:13, 15, 17; 7:6; 11:6, 17, where the word "promise" is used while the Covenant of Grace is meant. In Eph. 2:12 the Covenant of Grace is spoken of as the "covenants of promise." And the Catechism identifies the Covenant of Grace with the dispensation of grace when it calls the promise of the Covenant "the promise of the Gospel" (Qu. 66). From all this it is evident that the promise is the essential part of the Covenant, and that the Covenant as such is the form in which the promise was given. To the question, therefore, What is it to share in the essence of the Covenant? the answer must be: It is to share in the promise, to be one of those to whom the promise is given, to be an "heir of the promise."

> Hebr. 6:13, 17, 18, For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself.—Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

238. **The Promise Given in Paradise and the Covenant of Grace.** —The establishing of the Covenant of Grace with Abraham, 2000 years after creation, was not the beginning of the dispensation of grace, for the essential part, the salvatory promise, existed from the beginning, and thus the dispensation of grace existed from the beginning. The dispensation of grace began with the "mother-promise" which already included the granting of full deliverance and salvation, merely of grace, and with the obligation of faith and obedience. With the establishing of the Covenant of Grace only a new element entered into the dispensation of grace, namely this, that now to the salvatory promise was given the form of a covenant, of a compact, sealed with a Sacrament and an oath, that faith in a promise of so wonderful a grace to fallen, totally

depraved, damnable man might be encouraged and strengthened (Cf. §250).

239. **The Covenant of Grace a "Testament."**—In Hebr. 9:15ff. the Covenant of Grace is spoken of as a "testament," and therein we can find points indicative as to the character of that Covenant. For:

1. A testament, or last will, is "one-sided." It is made by the maker of the testament, the testator, and by him alone, not by him and the heir together. The testator is entirely free in his arrangements; he acts in a sovereign manner, and all that remains to be done on the part of the heir is thankful acceptance of the legacy. Such is exactly the character of the Covenant of Grace.

2. To be an heir means, not that one already has the heritage at his disposal, but that one has a legal right to it. He can depend on it that he shall receive his part of the heritage when at the proper moment he asserts his claim. He cannot lose it except by violating conditions that the testament may have or by rejecting the heritage. That again is what it means to be a member of the Covenant of Grace.

3. A heritage comes in the possession of the heir through granting on the part of the testator and accepting on his own part. It is a free grant on the part of the testator which only requires appropriation on his part and imposes upon him the duty of thankfulness. In the same manner salvation comes in the possession of the member of the Covenant of Grace.

4. Finally there is a similitude also in this respect that, just as a last will is drawn up by a competent person in legal form, this document also being called a "testament," the Covenant of Grace in the same way is described by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, which are called Old and New Testament (Cf. §36), and wherein we are told what the heritage is, who are heirs, and what the way is to enter into possession of the heritage.

240. **Special Characteristics of the Covenant of Grace.**—The following special characteristics of the Covenant of Grace may be mentioned: that it is one-sided, unbreakable, and unconditional.

241. **One-sided.**—A Covenant is called one-sided (monopleuric) when the whole covenant transaction is made by the first party, and the second party is not permitted to take any part in it whatsoever, to make any stipulation or condition but only to accept the covenant as the first party with sovereign pleasure has made it.

The Covenant of Grace is such a covenant. A covenant made by the infinite God with His creature cannot be other than one-sided. It is condescending goodness and mercy on the part of God that He

is willing to take man into a covenant with Him, but His majesty will not permit of man's appearing in such a covenant as a party of equal footing. For this reason the Covenant of Works (Cf. §143) was one-sided, and likewise the covenant with Noah, and the Covenant of Grace. The Lord does not say to Abraham: Let us make a covenant together, but: I will establish My covenant between Me and thee. And in the first stage of the establishing of the Covenant (Gen. 15) the Lord alone passed between the pieces, not the Lord and Abraham both, Gen. 15:17. The Covenant of Redemption, on the contrary, was a Covenant not with man but with the Son, and therefore not one-sided but two-sided (dupleuric), Ps. 2:8.

> Ps. 2:8, Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Concerning the one-sidedness of the Covenant of Grace is further to be said:

a) That to this it cannot be objected that the covenant members, in so far as they come to years of discretion, must believingly accept the Covenant, privately in communion with God, and publicly in confession of faith before the congregation, for this does not detract from its one-sidedness: 1) because this accepting the Covenant naturally does not affect its essence and its character; the Covenant is as it is only through what the Lord made it to be, and does not become different when the covenant member accepts it as He made it; 2) because the Covenant is not brought into existence through the acceptance of the covenant member, for it was already established with him in his infancy, so that, if he does not walk in the way of the Covenant, he is a covenant breaker, and it is evident that no one can become a covenant breaker unless the Covenant had been established with him; 3) because accepting the Covenant is not something concerning which the member of the Covenant can do as he chooses, which he can do or not as he pleases, but something to which he is in duty bound by the Covenant established with him.

b) That with a view to this one-sidedness it is not correct to call the Covenant of Grace an "agreement" or a "treaty," and to formulate the second part of the definition thus: "and the sinner accepts this believingly," as if the accepting were essential to the covenant transaction in the sense that thereby the Covenant first became effective, as would be the case in a dupleuric covenant. This second part of the definition must be formulated in a way conformable to the fact that we do not become Covenant members through an act of our own, but through the act of the Covenant God; that He establishes the Covenant relation, our Covenant relation to Him as well as His Covenant relation to us; and that accept-

ing the Covenant is not a part of the Covenant transaction, but only a part of the Covenant obligations, as not accepting the Covenant means breaking the Covenant. For that reason we have formulated that second part of the definition thus: "and binds them (the Covenant members) to Himself to be His own and to serve Him" (Cf. §237).

c. That if the Covenant were not one-sided the possibility would not exist for little children to be included in it "as well as the adult" (Catechism, Qu. 74). If it were a two-sided Covenant, no one could be a covenant member as long as he had not accepted it, and infants are not in a condition to accept it. In a one-sided covenant, on the contrary, the question as to membership is not: Who have or have not accepted it? but: Who have or have not been taken up in it by the covenant maker? And those taken up by the Covenant God in His Covenant of Grace were Abraham and his seed, that seed "as well" as Abraham himself.

With this two other points are closely related.

1) That through its one-sidedness the Covenant can be the ground for infant baptism, for if little children could not be included in the Covenant, then baptism as the seal thereof could not be administered to them; they would have no right to it; he who is not a member of the Covenant cannot receive the sign thereof.

2) That through its one-sidedness the Covenant can be the ground for what the Church confesses in the Canons of Dort regarding the election and salvation of Covenant children dying in infancy, as follows:

> Since we are to judge the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the Covenant of Grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy, Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:29; 1 Cor. 7:14 (Canons of Dordt, 1, 17).

At that Synod of Dordt, on the basis of these and other texts, the Theological Professors of the Netherlands, who were members of the assembly, declared:

> "From which places we conclude that the children of believers, dying in their infancy, must be considered as of the elect, since God has graciously taken them out of this life before they could have broken the conditions of the Covenant."

Thus the fathers of Dordt have expressed themselves concerning the salvation of such children, as also the texts cited show, exactly on the ground that the children of believers are included in the Covenant, really share in it; that, without conscious acceptance on their part, it has been established with them; and that therefore, since God is faithful and keeps His Covenant and they

cannot have broken it, their salvation is assured. This implies that of children of the Covenant none are taken away by the Lord in their early youth but such as belong to the elect, and that before their death regeneration and justification are granted them.

242. **Unbreakable.**—That the Lord gave His Covenant of Grace as an unbreakable Covenant is plain from the words "for an everlasting covenant," Gen. 17:7, for they do not mean that it was already established in eternity, but, as they clearly say, that He gives it for an everlasting Covenant, to be an eternal Covenant, that never might be broken.

This does not mean that it is impossible to break the Covenant, i. e. to break our personal covenant relation. The contrary is evident from Scripture. In Gen. 17:14 it is said of him who did not permit himself to be circumcised: "he hath broken my covenant;" likewise it is said in Hos. 6:7: "they like Adam have transgressed the covenant;" and when the prophets charged Israel wth "adultery" and "playing the harlot," as they repeatedly did, they meant Israel's covenant breaking with their idolatry. Also in the New Testament do we read of "Sons of the Kingdom cast forth into outer darkness," Matt. 8:12, of "branches in the true vine" taken away and cast into the fire, John 15:2, 6; of "branches partaking of the root and fatness of the olive tree" being broken off, Rom. 11:17-21.

In view of this fact the question may rise whether then the Covenant of Grace must not be regarded as a breakable Covenant? This, however, would be incorrect. We have to judge such matters, not according to what sin had made possible, but according to the ordinance of God. Marriage too can be broken. But from this fact it does not follow that marriage is a breakable covenant, since it is the ordinance of God that it never shall be broken, Matt. 19:3-9. To regard it as a breakable institution would mean that it not only can, but that it may be broken, whereas to regard it as an unbreakable institution means that, although it can be broken, it may not be broken, so that breaking it is not a lawful deed but a sin, and no sin has a right to exist. So also the Covenant of Grace. It is an unbreakable Covenant because God has given it for an everlasting Covenant, so that, although it can be broken through sin, it never may be broken.

The figure of marriage is the more apt since Scripture teaches that marriage is intended to express the covenant relation of Christ to the Church, Eph. 5:31, 32. As such it teaches us even more. It teaches us also something concerning the result of Covenant breaking. Adultery on the part of one party frees the other from all promises and duties of the marriage bond, and gives the innocent party even the right to have the marriage bond legally

dissolved by the civil judge, something which Scripture does not allow in any other case, Matt. 5:32. So also by breaking the Covenant a Covenant member frees the Lord from everything to which He graciously had bound Himself. By making a Covenant with us the Lord God took obligations upon Himself towards us, but the Covenant breaker frees Him of these obligations. How terrible will be in all eternity the regret for having done this!

243. **Unconditional.**—We have seen that the Covenant of Grace is to be designated as an one-sided Covenant, although there are two parties to it, and that it is to be designated as an unbreakable Covenant, although through sin it can be broken. Likewise it is to be designated as an unconditional Covenant, although there are what are usually called "conditions" of the Covenant.

That it is an unconditional Covenant is evident from the fact that the Lord established it not only with Abraham but also with his seed, with a seed that was still to be born, and even with that seed in its generations. If there were conditions to be fulfilled in order to participate in the Covenant, then, of course, it could not have been made with a still unborn seed.

And if it were a conditional Covenant, it would not be truly a Covenant of Grace, but a sort of Covenant of Works. To be actually a Covenant of Grace it must be a covenant in which full salvation is granted, merely of grace, and without conditions.

When, therefore, we are accustomed to speak of conditions of the Covenant and mention as such faith and obedience, this must not be misunderstood. Faith and obedience must not be regarded as conditions for becoming participants in the Covenant, for we are participants in it from the time of our birth. Even in the Covenant of Works the condition of obedience was not a condition for being taken into the Covenant, but for keeping the Covenant and for gaining its reward. In the same way faith and obedience are conditions for keeping the Covenant of Grace and for inheriting the promise, Heb. 6:15, whereas unbelief and disobedience make the Covenant member a Covenant breaker, who shall not enter in: Heb. 3:18-19. Hence the earnest admonitions of the Lord Jesus to abide in Him, John 15:4-6. It might be preferable to call faith and obedience not conditions but obligations of the Covenant.

> Heb. 6:15, And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise.
> Heb. 3:18, 19, And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.
> John 15:4-6, Abide in me, and I in you. . . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

244. **The Parties of the Covenant.**—As parties to the Covenant

of Grace are mentioned in Gen. 17: on the one hand Jehovah, the Triune God, and on the other hand Abraham and his seed in their generations.

The first party is not the Father alone, but the Triune God, as has been pointed out in §236, 1.

The second party is not Christ, the Mediator, but Abraham and his seed in their generations, as has also been pointed out in §236, 1.

The words "thy seed in their generations" do not mean the elect, but Abraham's natural seed. Irrefutable proof for this fact is the divine command that all of Abraham's natural seed, Ishmael too, Gen. 17:23, 25, 26, must receive the sign and seal of the Covenant, Gen. 17:6-13, or be cut off from his people as one who had broken the Covenant, Gen. 17:14. For, as Calvin says, "the Lord has certainly not favored them with circumcision, without imparting to them everything that this circumcision signified. Otherwise He would have mocked His people with mere delusions, if He had deceived them with deceitful signs" (Institution, IV, 16, 5).

In fact the Lord made His ordinance concerning participation in the Covenant of Grace so wide, that even all of them had to be circumcised who were foreigners, not of Abraham's seed, but born in his house or bought with his money, such therefore over whom Abraham had authority. In the same manner it was later ordained that every slave, bought with money, over whom therefore the Israelites had authority, was to be circumcised and then to eat the Passover, but not so the hired servant, Exod. 12:44, 45.

So Ishmael was not excluded, nor the sons of Keturah, nor Esau, but they left the Covenant or were "sent away from Isaac," and became the fathers of Arabian tribes. The promise was: My Covenant will I establish with Isaac, Gen. 17:19, 21, In Isaac shall thy seed be called, Gen. 21:12. To the Covenant promise, Gen. 17:8, was immediately added the promise regarding Canaan, Gen. 17:8, indicating that especially that seed of Abraham was meant to which the Lord should give Canaan. To this incorporation in the Covenantal promise Canaan owes its symbolical meaning, Heb. 3:11, 4:11.

Under the New Testament dispensation it is no longer Abraham's natural seed, which "because of unbelief was broken off," Rom. 11:20, but his spiritual seed, viz. the believers, Gal. 3:7, 9, 29, the believers, however, again with their seed, their natural children, 1 Cor. 7:14b, so that also under this dispensation the Covenant continues itself in the line of the generations.

> Gal. 3:7, 9, 29, know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. . . . . So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham. . . . . And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.
>
> 1 Cor. 7:14, For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and

> the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy.

Emphasis is to be laid on the fact that this seed is not only taken up in the Covenant, but that it is given the same place, the same status in the Covenant as that of adult believers; that infants are included in the Covenant as well as the adult (Catechism, Qu. 74). This is plainly expressed in the words: "And I will establish my covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee," Gen. 17:7. These words can only mean that Abraham and the seed of Abraham are placed on the same plane as party of the Covenant, and that the Covenant is established as well with that seed as with Abraham. The children share as well as adult believers in the privileges of the Covenant, and if they die in their infancy they die in full covenant relation with God, they die "in the Lord." If, however, they come to years of discretion, being born of believing parents is no longer sufficient to share in the full covenant relation and covenant benefits. Then this is only true of those who walk in the ways of the Covenant, and through faith and obedience abide in Christ. Those, on the contrary, who do not, will be cast out. Divine patience, so signally shown in permitting His Covenant remain effective for idolatrous Israel, Jer. 3:14, may be tardy in rejecting them as they reject Him, but, if they do not repent, that time will surely come, whether it be through death, or through being abandoned to their own pleasure, Ps. 81:11, 12.

245. **The Benefits of the Covenant.**—The privileges or benefits of the Covenant of Grace are contained in the promise: "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." For this promise includes all that is good for time and eternity. With this promise the Lord grants Himself to the covenant member, and He is the highest good. The Form for the Administration of Baptism gives us a very beautiful explanation of the Covenant promise in its elucidation of what is signed and sealed to us when we are baptized in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit (Cf. §247). The Catechism interprets the contents of the promise with the words, "that He grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross" (Qu. 66).

246. **Twofold Impartment of Salvation.**—In order to understand how in the Covenant salvation can be given, not only to the elect, but also to the non-elect, we must bear in mind that there is to be distinguished a twofold imparting of salvation. This distinction is plainly made in the Thanksgiving of the Form for the administration of the Lord's Supper in the words: "We render Thee most humble and hearty thanks, that Thou hast of Thy

infinite mercy, given us Thine only begotten Son, for a Mediator and a sacrifice for our sins, and to be our meat and drink unto eternal life, and that Thou givest us lively faith, whereby we are made partakers of such great benefits." Here mention is made: a) of the giving of Christ to be our Redeemer, and b) making us participants of His benefits through faith. This implies that the giving does not make us actual possessors, but that together with the giving we need an application of these benefits by the Holy Spirit. The same is expressed in the Form for the administration of Baptism by stating that when we are baptized in His name the Holy Spirit assures us that He is willing "to apply to us that which we have in Christ." Therefore, that which we have in Christ, we still need to have applied to us by the Holy Ghost.

This is clearly a twofold imparting of grace, one through the giving of it, and another through application by the Holy Spirit. The first is that of the Covenant of Grace and of the Gospel with its offer of salvation, and the second is that of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The first may be called an objective, and the second a subjective imparting. The first is granted to all Covenant members, even to all those who hear the Gospel, and the second is granted only to the elect. The first has its ground in the fact that it pleases the Lord to lead His elect to salvation not as mere objects, but as persons created in His image, and the second is necessary on account of our spiritual impotence by nature.

Here we are concerned with the imparting of the Covenant and the Gospel. It places in objective possession, i. e. it places the Covenant member in a position that he has a claim to salvation, just as an heir has a claim on the heritage, but is not yet an actual possessor of it. Covenant members are therefore rightly called "heirs of the kingdom of God and of His Covenant."

This is also the meaning of "to give." This word does not mean to place in actual possession, unless in cases where there is no ability to accept and to appropriate, but only "to offer," "to present." To give something to a person means to bestow on him the right to take it, to take possession of it, leaving it to him whether he will make use of that right or not. Whether therefore that which is given to us will or will not really become ours depends upon our accepting or not accepting it.

From this it is plain that there can be no defensible objection to the assertion, that full salvation is given to all Covenant members, as that does not mean that they all, every one of them, are placed in actual possession of salvation. But it means: a) that the children of the Covenant dying in infancy, before a conscious acceptance of salvation on their side is possible, are made actual partakers of salvation through regeneration and justification;

b) that those who are destined to grow up, have received a claim on salvation, the right to take it without money or price, so that if they take this wonderful gift of grace, they will become actual possessors and be saved, John 1:12; while those who neglect to take it will never become actual possessors and will be cast forth into outer darkness, Matt. 8:12; Luke 14:24.

Thus to emphasize the necessity of personal appropriation of salvation as an act on our part on which will depend whether we will be saved or not, is not Arminian doctrine. The error of the Arminian is not that he lays stress on the demand of faith and obedience, and teaches that we will be held responsible if we do not believe and repent, and that if we are lost it will be our own fault. On the contrary, ceaselessly the Scriptures seek to impress upon our mind that in order to be saved there must be a definite act of faith, of acceptance, of appropriation on our part. This act is presented as faith, John 3:16, as receiving (accepting) Christ, John 1:12, as looking unto Him, to be saved, Is. 45:22, as coming unto Him to buy and eat, Is. 55:1, as entering in through the door, John 10:9, as opening the door to the knocking Savior, Rev. 3:20, as eating the bread of life, John 6:51, as taking the water of life, Rev. 22:17, as taking His yoke upon us, Matt. 11:28, etc., it is always the same definite act of appropriation that is meant, and that is presented as being indispensible to the saved. The error of the Arminian is, that he considers the natural man as capable of this act and denies that it can only be a fruit of special grace.

247. **Explanation of the Covenantal Promise in the Baptismal Form.**—In connection with these things the explanation found in the Form for the Administration of Baptism of the Covenantal promise as it is sealed to the children of believers in Baptism, merits our attention. It reads as follows:

> "For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit.
>
> "And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God.
>
> "When we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

Besides a beautiful explanation of the Covenant promise, displaying its wonderful wealth of grace, we have in this quotation

a corroboration of what we have discussed in the preceding paragraph. In connection with the objective benefits which are sealed to us in baptism in the name of the Father and the Son the terms used are: "that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us," "adopts us for His children and heirs," "that He doth wash us in His blood," "incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection," "so that we are freed from all our sins," "and accounted righteous before God"—all terms expressing the actual bestowing of these benefits on those who are baptized. But with respect to the subjective application through the Holy Spirit it is said, not that the Holy Spirit actually does that, or certainly shall do that, but that He will (is willing to) do that.

This is again the same teaching of a twofold impartment of benefits of grace: one consisting in the actual bestowal of the benefits, and one consisting in the subjective applying unto us of these benefits by the Holy Spirit, the "applying unto us of that which we have in Christ." In regard to the former baptism seals to everyone who is baptized that he actually participates in it, and in regard to the latter, not that he actually participates in it, but that the Holy Spirit is willing to make him a participant thereof.

248. **Subjective Covenant-Grace.**—It seems to us that there is Scriptural evidence unmistakably pointing to an actual bestowal on the Covenant members of a certain measure of subjective grace also, so that the subjective spiritual condition of Covenant children is different from that of children outside of the Covenant, heathen children, for instance. In John 15:1-7 the Lord presents Himself as the True Vine, of whom the Covenant members are the branches, and not only the fruitful but also the unfruitful branches are branches "in Him," organically united to Him. Likewise in Rom. 11:17-21 the Covenant members are designated as branches which had "become partakers of the root and the fatness of the olive tree." And according to Is. 5:4 the Lord judges that He may rightfully ask of Covenant members because of what He had done for them: What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Would it not be Pelagian doctrine if this passage would mean that the Lord considered the work He had done in His vineyard, although it had been merely external, so that nothing had been done in the vines inwardly, to be all that was to be done, and that on account of that external work He had full right to expect good fruit?

On the other hand these same passages show clearly that the grace referred to is not a grace which insures salvation. To be a branch in Christ is no guarantee against being taken away, Joh.

15:2; to be a branch partaking of the root and the fatness of the olive tree is no guarantee against being broken off, Rom. 11:21; and the vineyard of Is. 5 had brought forth wild grapes and was to be laid waste, Is. 5:5ff. Yet it is a grace which takes from the Covenant member all excuse for not bringing forth the desired fruit of the Covenant. If we accept that the granting of a larger measure of common grace belonged to the benefits of the Covenant with Noah, there is no reason why we should hesitate to accept that there is a granting of a certain subjective grace as one of the benefits of the Covenant with Abraham.

249. **The Covenant Promise and the Gospel.**—In Qu. 66 the Catechism says that the Sacraments are "appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel." The Sacraments, which are signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, of the covenantal promise, are here called signs and seals of the promise of the Gospel. This shows that according to the Reformed conception the promise of the Covenant and the promise of the Gospel are one and the same. The promise of the Covenant was the Gospel of the Old Testament, and the Gospel of the New Testament is the promise of the Covenant more fully revealed.

From this identity of the promise (the essential part) of the Covenant and the Gospel it is again evident that the Covenant of Grace is a covenant, not as the Covenant of Redemption for the procuring, but for the dispensation and the application of grace; that it belongs to the dispensation of grace, and is the covenantal form given to the dispensation of grace; that the salvatory promise is its essential part (Cf. §237).

The offer of the Gospel, therefore, is an offer of all the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and when the Gospel comes to the heathen they are offered all that is granted to the Covenant member. But this does not mean that as soon as the Gospel comes to the heathen he shares in all the benefits in which the Covenant member shares. Quite the contrary. The heathen has the granting only in the form of an offer, but the Covenant member has the granting in the form of a covenant, in the form of a divine bond, sworn to with an oath and sealed by baptism as an "undoubtable witness." Moreover it contains this blessed privilege that the Covenant member is a branch of the True Vine.

250. **The Purpose of the Covenant of Grace.**—The Covenant of Grace is the covenantal form of the dispensation of grace. Now the question is: For what purpose was it that the Lord gave to the dispensation of grace or to the salvatory promise the form of a covenant? To this question Scripture answers: In order to encourage and strengthen faith in the promise, in His grace in Christ,

His willingness to save. This is plainly pointed out in Gen. 15, where we have an account of the formal ratification of the Covenant. There we find that this divine act was the answer to Abraham's question: O Lord Jehovah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? Abraham asked for a sign, and in the Covenant the Lord gave him a sign in order to encourage and strengthen his weak faith. And in Heb. 6:17, 18 we have a direct statement concerning this purpose in the words: Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. That is to say, it was the divine pleasure to establish His gracious promise to the heirs so positively, that there would remain no room for the doubts and misgivings of a weak faith. To that end He gave in His Covenant and oath two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. Thus He gave to those who have fled for refuge to His promise of grace a strong encouragement to lay hold on that promise, to grasp it, to appropriate it, thoroughly convinced of their right to do so by these immutable things.

The purpose of the Covenant of Grace, therefore, is to serve for encouraging and strengthening faith. It is given to answer the doubting question: Is it for me? Have I the right to appropriate that wonderful gift of full salvation to myself? the right to come and take of the waters of life freely? For this is indeed the question with which weak faith must struggle so often, and the more so when one's misery, one's unworthiness, one's damnableness is more deeply felt. As this is the purpose of the Sacraments, so it is also the purpose of the Covenant of which they are signs and seals.

It is very remarkable to observe how manifold have been the divine activities concerning the salvatory promise, activities which evidently always had as their purpose to encourage and strengthen faith in this promise. For that purpose He has given His name Jehovah, the Unchangeable, the Faithful One, as His Covenant name. For that purpose He has repeated His promise again and again in many a form and in different wording, e. g. Is. 45:22; 55:1; Jer. 3:14; 8:22; Ezek. 33:11, etc. (Cf. §448). For that purpose He has typified the promise in historical facts and events, as in the gift of manna, of water from the rock, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, the history of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. Especially in this piece of Israel's history we have a very striking representation of the promise, of the Covenant member's share in that promise, of his right and obligation to believe and appropriate the promise, of the necessity thereof to inherit salvation (Hebr. 4:1-11).

For that purpose also He has given to the promise of salvation the binding form of a covenant, of a covenant confirmed with an oath and witnessed and sealed with Sacraments. All of this shows the adorable greatness of God's condescending mercy.

An element of the Covenant itself, which corroborates the assertion that its purpose is the encouragement and strengthening of faith, is its objectivity. We mean by this term its being of such a nature that it can be known on objective grounds who are Covenant members and who are not. Especially under the Old Testament this objectivity of the Covenant was very marked, as the Lord had provided for it in different ways. He established the Covenant with a definite person and a definite people, that was to dwell in a definite land of its own, secluded from other nations. Moreover, He ordained with great emphasis that each individual of the Covenant people should be marked with a distinctive sign of the Covenant, Gen. 17:13, should have "the Covenant in his flesh," should have therein, as the Baptismal Form rightly calls it, "an undoubted testimony, that he has an eternal covenant of grace with God." All this for the sake of making it possible for each Covenant member to know himself with objective certainty to be a participant in the Covenant, an heir of its promise. It is obvious that this objectivity of the Covenant is a very important element of its efficiency for encouraging and strengthening faith, and that without it, it could not answer that purpose.

251. **The Obligation of the Covenant.**—The obligations of the Covenant are: faith and obedience. They are not intended as obligations which the covenant member must fulfill of himself, for no one would be able to do so. In this also the Covenant shows itself to be a Covenant of Grace, that the Covenant God Himself will grant the strength to fulfill them. The assurance that He is willing to "sanctify us to be members in Christ" is included in the Covenant promise, and therefore they who reach the years of discretion are the more required to fulfill these demands. The unbeliever and the disobedient shall perish, Heb. 3:18, 19, and shall receive a severer judgment; the branch that does not bear fruit shall be cast forth into the fire, John 15:6.

252. **Identity of the Covenant under Old and New Testament Dispensations.**—The manner of administering the Covenant under the Old Testament dispensation was different from that under the New Testament dispensation, but the Covenant itself was the same. Under the New Testament dispensation it is the same vineyard as under the Old, but now given to other husbandmen, Matt. 21:31-41, and the same olive tree, but other branches grafted upon it, Rom. 11:17. Places such as Luke 1:72; Acts 2:39; 3:25; Gal.

3:7, and others teach the same thing. The promise of the Gospel is the same as that of the Covenant, but a fuller revelation of that promise.

To maintain this unity of the Covenant is of great importance for the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace and of the Sacraments, especially of Baptism, as this doctrine is rooted in the Old Testament. If the Covenant with Abraham were destined for the Old Testament dispensation and for Israel alone, then that Covenant does not concern us, and its "two immutable things" cannot be "a great encouragement" to us. Then, too, Baptism did not come in the place of circumcision, and there would be no ground for infant Baptism. This unity is mostly denied by Baptists and Premillenarians.

The dispensation of the New Testament is the last, and will not be replaced by another, for it is a dispensation after the death of the Testator, and also of this testament it is true that it "is in force where here hath been death," Hebr. 9:16, 17.

> Luk. 1:68, 72, 73, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people, ... To show mercy towards our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware unto Abraham our father.
>
> Acts 3:25, Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
>
> Gal. 3:7, Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham.

253. **The Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works.**—The points of similarity and difference between these two Covenants have been mentioned in §147. We wish to call attention to that paragraph, because a comparison between the two Covenants may serve as another proof to show that the Covenant of Grace is not to be identified with the Covenant of Redemption, being given, not as the latter for the sake of the procuring, but for the sake of the dispensation and application of salvation.

By the Covenant of Grace the Covenant of Works was not abolished but fully maintained and all its demands fulfilled, not by the covenant members but by Christ as the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace.

254. **Identification of the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Redemption.**—According to the conception which the Reformers had of the Covenant of Grace, as this is set down in the Doctrinal Standards, the parties of the Covenant were: the Triune God on one side and Abraham and his seed, or the believers and their seed, on the other (Cf. §§236, 244). In the seventeenth century with the scholastic theology a new conception arose of the parties of

the Covenant. According to this conception the parties were: the Triune God on the one hand and the elect on the other. This conception can be found in the standard works on Dogmatics of our Theologians of that period. Two little compendiums, still in use for catechetical instruction, dating from that time, can serve as proof of the change, We refer to those of Borstius and Hellenbroek. To the question, with whom the Covenant of Grace was made? the answer of the former, who died in 1680, was: With Abraham and his seed, Gen. 17:1, 2, 7; but that of the latter, who died in 1731, 50 years later, was: Only with the elect, Ezek. 16:6. This text is not a very convincing prooftext for the statement, as the persons spoken to in Ezek. 16 are certainly not "only the elect." But it is no wonder that not a better one could be found.

In the meantime another conception arose in England, which was set down in the Westminster Catechism as the accepted doctrine of the Presbyterian Church, which conception subsequently also found acceptance in the Netherlands. According to this conception the parties of the Covenant were: God the Father on the one hand, and Christ as head and representative of the elect on the other. By this conception the identification of the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Redemption was completed. With the rise of these differing conceptions confusion has been brought about with respect to the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace and of Baptism which still reigns to the great detriment of spiritual life.

The second and third conceptions have some similarity as both have the doctrine of election as their basis, and both consider the Covenant as dupleuric, being established either between the Triune God and the elect, or between God the Father and God the Son as representative of the elect. But the difference is, that according to the second view the Covenant is established with the elect in time by their believing acceptance of it, while according to the third view it was established with them in Christ in eternity, and the significance of believing acceptance is not that thereby one enters into the Covenant, but only that thereby he becomes conscious of his participation from eternity in the Covenant. Exactly in line with this view is that of justification from eternity. The significance of faith for justification is then only that it is a means through which one becomes conscious of his justification from eternity.

And both conceptions equally deprive the Covenant, and consequently also Baptism, of their practical value to encourage and strengthen faith, by transferring the Covenant from the sphere of the revealed things to that of the hidden things, so that it loses its objectivity.

These conceptions were taught by not a few of our highly respected theologians of the 17th and 18th centuries, men who did not think of teaching anything at variance with Scripture and Reformed doctrine. Still it is plain as day that on these points their conceptions were at variance with those of the Reformers, which were laid down in the Confessional Standards and accepted as the doctrine of the Church; at variance, too, with what we will find to be the teaching of Scripture if full justice is done to it. But these men were living in a time in which, as is generally conceded, Scripture study, which had flourished so eminently in the Reformaton period and for a while thereafter, was sadly on the wane, and in which philosophical thinking, logical reasoning, gained the ascendency to such an extent that even Reformed theologians did not sufficiently keep in view the fact that in their study philosophy and logic can render valuable service, but must not be allowed to rule, (Cf. §236).

If, with Calvin, we see in Gen. 17 the record of the establishing of the Covenant with Abraham, we must come to other conclusions. That the covenant of which we read in that chapter was not a covenant "only with the elect" is most evident. It was established with Abraham and his seed, his natural seed; every individual belonging to that seed must receive circumcision, the sign of the Covenant, must have in this circumcision "the covenant in his flesh," or else be exterminated from among his people. How positively did the Prophets proceed from the principle that every Israelite was a covenant member, Jer. 3:14. So also the Apostles when they addressed the Jews as they did in Acts 2:39; 2:25. In Rom. 9:4 with an eye to Jews who were "anathema from Christ" Paul says: "Who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." And when subsequently he wishes to explain that through their perdition the Word of God has nevertheless not come to naught, he takes back nothing of this but points to it that behind the revealed things which must be for us a rule of life and to which the Covenant belongs, there lie the hidden things, the counsel of God, which is the rule according to which He Himself works.

And the Catechism also says without any limitation that all young children must be baptized, "since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God;" whereas the Form for the Administration of Baptism calls the baptism which is administered to the children of believers "an undoubted testimony," "that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God," and baptism can only be this when it can be regarded as such not for the elect only but, objectively, for all baptized children of believers.

255. **Consequences of this Identification.**—When the Covenant of Grace is in such a manner connected with election and placed under the control thereof, so that to be of the elect is regarded as an absolute requirement for being a covenant member, the consequences must necessarily be:

1) That thereby the character of the Covenant is totally changed. It is then not a Covenant of which the essential part is the salvatory promise (Cf. §237), but of which being of the elect is the essential part. Members of the Covenant are then, not all those "to whom the promise is," Acts 2:39, the believers and their children, but only those who are of the elect, and who they are we do not know. Then also there can be no covenant breaking, of which Scripture speaks positively and repeatedly. Children of believers who stray from the path of the Covenant are not considered as covenant breakers, but as such who never were in the Covenant.

2) That thereby the Covenant is deprived of its objectivity, for then it can no more be known whether one is a covenant member than it can be known whether he is one of the elect. It cannot be known of others whether they are covenant members, and we cannot know it even of ourselves, at least not on objective grounds, but only in so far as we are convinced that we are of the elect. And that while the Lord Himself so carefully provided for the objectivity of the Covenant!

Very grave consequences of this depriving the Covenant of its objectivity were:

a) That the ground for Baptism, especially for infant Baptism, was nullified. No one is entitled to receive the sign and seal of the Covenant unless he is a covenant member. The Church, therefore, has no right to administer Baptism unless to those of whom it positively knows that they are covenant members. Consequently it would be impossible for the Church to administer Baptism if the covenant members are not cognizable on objective grounds. Even confession of faith of an adult could not be considered as sufficient for baptizing him as a covenant member, since it is no guarantee that the confessor is not a hypocrite as Simon the Sorcerer was, but a true believer and one of the elect. Still less can be known whether an infant is one of the elect. The position that the children of believers must be baptized "since they, as well as the adult, are included in the Covenant and Church of God" (Catechism, Qu. 74) is then untenable.

One of the efforts to find a way out in regard to infant Baptism was the invention that the Covenant of Grace was a dual Covenant, consisting of an "external" and an "internal" Covenant. The internal Covenant was then the Covenant as established with the elect, whereas the external Covenant embraced all the children of

believers and had for its substance only the benefits of being an object of the external dispensation of the Covenant. If a child were not a member of the internal Covenant, it surely was a member of the external Covenant, and on that ground it could be baptized as a covenant member. Another effort to solve the problem was the assertion that all the children of believers must be baptized in order to make sure that the elect were baptized.

Our Confessional Standards do not know of such a dual Covenant. That which according to them is witnessed and sealed to all children by Baptism is far more than that they are objects of the external Covenant dispensation.

b) That likewise the ground was taken away for the Reformed Doctrine regarding the salvation of covenant children dying in infancy (Cf. §241, 3). That ground was that all children of believers are covenant members, but according to the view in question they are not all covenant members. All that could be said was that children of believers dying in infancy were saved if they were elect ones, but whether they were elect ones nobody could tell. Instead of the expression of the Canons of Dort: godly parents must not doubt of the election and salvation of such children, there came into use such expressions as: we may hope so, according to the judgment of love we may suppose so. If the parents had been exceptionally prayerful in behalf of the child, or had received a special promise concerning it, this signified much more for its salvation than did the Covenant sealed by Baptism.

c) That Covenant and Sacraments were deprived of their significance for the exercise of faith. God's Covenant and His oath could then no longer be "a strong encouragement" for weak faith, and no more could the Sacraments. To believe is to accept as true God's promise of salvation, and the saving act of faith is the appropriation to oneself of the forgiving of sins and life eternal offered and granted in that promise. To do this I must know that the promise concerns me, and to assure me of that fact is exactly the purpose for which Covenant and Sacraments were given. They do this very simply and objectively by assuring me that I, as a child of believing parents, am a covenant member, an heir to the promise.

But if only the elect are covenant members, the matter assumes a different aspect. Then I immediately lose this objective ground, the objective ground for trusting that the promise of salvation concerns me, for then I lose the certainty that I am a covenant member. The first thing I have to know then is whether I am one of the elect. Before I can have certainty that I am a covenant member, that the promise concerns me, that I have the right to appropriate to myself the benefits of grace granted therein, I must have certainty that I am one of those that are chosen.

There is a way, however, according to the said theory by which it is possible to gain knowledge concerning our election. It is the way of the "marks of grace." One must investigate to see if in his inner life and experiences he finds the marks of grace, the signs of the activity of the Holy Spirit. If he finds these signs, he may conclude, first that he is one of the elect, next that he is a covenant member, further that he participates in the promise, and finally that he has the right to appropriate to himself the benefits of grace.

Thus religious experientialism, emotional life was made the basis of faith, and a faith resting on such an unstable, fluctuating basis could but be an unstable, fluctuating faith, a faith sometimes hoping, mostly doubting and fearing, always wanting to see first, and never arriving at stability and certainty. That weak faith, how much has been complained of it in the past, and how much is it still to be complained of! And yet this weak faith has been systematically fostered.

For this kind of faith Covenant and Sacraments have scarcely any value. At times when a person's faith is weak, so that he does not dare to consider himself one of the elect, Covenant and Sacraments can do absolutely nothing to encourage and strengthen his faith, because he cannot know whether what they promise and seal concerns him. That he can know only when his faith is strong, so strong that he knows himself to be one of the elect, but then he has little need of encouragement and strengthening of his faith. The Baptismal Form, on the contrary, speaks of the value of Baptism when "through weakness we fell into sin", and our faith is at such a low ebb that we are on the point of "despairing of God's mercy." Even then, the Form tells us, we may and must hold fast on Baptism, as at that time just as well as at other times we have in that Sacrament "a seal and undoubtable testimony, that we have an eternal Covenant of Grace with God."

256. **The Distinction between an Internal and an External Covenant.**—In the preceding paragraph we have seen why this distinction was made and what was understood thereby. Since this distinction has found much favor, we wish to add for refutation:

1) That this distinction is in conflict with Scriptures and the Confessional Standards. The Covenant of Gen. 17 is one Covenant with one kind of covenant members, a Covenant that had for its essential part the salvatory promise, and that had for all covenant members the same meaning. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, is convinced that all his hearers as covenant members share alike in the privilege that "to them is the promise, and to their children," Acts 2:39. Paul does not hesitate to declare of such Jews as were "anathema from Christ," that to them as Israelites "is the adop-

tion, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," Rom. 9:4. Likewise the Catechism in Qu. 74, and the Baptismal Form in its explanation of what is signed and sealed unto us when we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

2) That the distinction is of no value to remove the injurious consequences of identification of Covenant of Grace and Covenant of Redemption. What a person who seeks salvation wants to know and needs to know is, whether he shares in that which is the essence of the Covenant. The witnessing and sealing by Baptism merely of the fact that he is an object of the administration of the Covenant would avail him nothing, as that is a matter which his eyes can see and his hands can handle. Yet, as long as his election remains for him a hidden thing, he would have no ground to consider his Baptism as witnessing and sealing to him anything more than that.

257. **The Covenant of Grace and the Visible Church.**—That, as has been mentioned before (§234), with the establishment of the Covenant of Grace the visible Church was called into being, is evident from the following considerations:

1) Thereby was formed, instead of the sporadic existence of believing individuals before Abraham, a well defined, unified body of believers and their seed, the body of the covenant people, which is also the body of the visible Church. Being a covenant member and being a member of the visible Church go as a rule together. To be included in the Covenant is at the same time to be included in the Church of God, as the Catechism (Qu. 74) says. And the Baptismal Form states that children "as members of the Church ought to be baptized," which statement implies that Church membership is the same as Covenant membership, and that the seal of Covenant membership is at the same time the seal of Church membership. Before the Covenant of Grace was established there was a promise of salvation and a dispensation of grace, there were believers and there was a Church, but there was no Church which formed a visible unity as there has been ever since.

2) The covenant people was the Lord's "own possession from among all peoples," a people that was to be unto Him "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," Exod. 19:5, 6, and the same is said of the Church, 1 Pet. 2:9. Not the invisible Church only but the visible Church is presented as the body of Christ in the parable of the vine as having fruitful and unfruitful branches, not only the former but also the latter being branches "in Me," in Christ, John 15:1-8. Baptism, the sign and seal of incorporation into the Covenant and into the Church, is as such also the sign and seal of incorporation in Christ (Cf. §248).

3) The benefits, rights, and obligation of the Church are the same as those of the Covenant. The treasures of the Church are according to the Compendium (Qu. 42) remission of sin, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life, and all these are included in the covenant promise. The right of Church membership is therefore a right to these treasures, and the same is true of the right of covenant membership. And the obligations of Church membership are also the same as those of covenant membership, viz. faith and obedience.

4) And to the visible Church is given the task of the administration of the Covenant, "unto the building up of itself in love," Eph. 4:16. For that purpose the ecclesiastical offices were given, and through them the Church has to administer Word and Sacraments of the Covenant "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ," Eph. 4:11, 12.

2. The Church

258. **The Word Church."**—The word "church" is derived from the Greek "kyriakee," which signifies: that which is the Lord's. A very beautiful name. All that exists is the Lord's, but it is the inestimable privilege of the Church to be "the Lord's" in the most special sense, His personal possession, purchased with His own blood, His body, His bride, His eternal Kingdom. In the Greek New Testament, however, this word is not used but the word "ekklesia," which means: assembly of those called. In our English Bibles this word is translated by "Church."

259. **Distinctions with respect to the Church.**—With respect to the Church the following distinctions are made:

1. that of the Church militant and the Church triumphant. By the Church militant is meant the Church as it exists here upon earth in its struggle, and by the Church triumphant is meant the assembly of the saved in heaven, who there celebrate their triumph.

2. that of the Church militant into the visible and invisible Church.

The visible Church is the assembly of those who profess to be believers, with their seed; the Church as it exists in the circle of the Covenant; the vine with fruitful but also with unfruitful branches which will be taken away by the Husbandman at His time; the house wherein are sons and servants but in which only the sons remain eternally, John 8:35. This Church is visible in its organization and its institutions (its offices, its ministering of the Word and the Sacraments, its church assemblies, its Confession

and Church Government) and by the cognizability of its members.

The invisible Church is the assembly of all true believers and of them alone; the vine with only fruitful branches; the house with only sons; the pure body of Christ as this exists before God who knows those that are His. As such the Church is invisible, an object of faith, for as consisting of true believers and of them alone it has no visible institution, and we cannot know with certainty who belongs to it.

260. **Relation of the Circle of the Visible to that of the Invisible Church.**—Should these two groups be identical? Should they completely coincide? Opinions concerning this vary. The Labadists assert that the Church must provide for this, and that it can also provide for this, for they believe, as do the Pietists, that regeneration is objectively cognizable. The Church has therefore no right, according to them, to accept any others as members than those who appear to be regenerated persons. That this is in conflict with the Scriptures is evident from the parable of the True Vine, John 15:1-7, from that of the Draw-net, Matt. 13:47-50, and from other passages of Scripture.

Directly opposed to this conception is the opinion that the Church must be a "Peoples Church," including all the people in the country in which it is established, in like manner as under the Old Testament dispensation it included the whole Israelitish nation. The visible Church is in that case the large external group within which the invisible Church exists as a smaller inner group, "the Church within the Church." But this conception also is not according to the Scriptures. It goes too far in the other direction; the visible Church is then only an institution for the administration of the means of grace and no more.

Fact is that the two groups do not coincide, at least not exactly, that they never have done so, and until the end of days never will do so; that it is not the will of God that they should exactly coincide, nor the duty of the Church to make them exactly coincide. Such a duty would require of the Church to remove from its midst all such that do not belong to the invisible Church. This, however, the Church has a right to do or is capable to do only in regard to some, not in regard to others.

The Church has in its midst all the seed of its believing members. Those who belong to that seed are not all members of the invisible Church, nor destined to become such. Yet they all, the reprobate not excepted, have in the Covenant and in the Church a lawful place, given them of God, who Himself had included them in His Covenant and in His Church. As long as they have not come to years of discretion, the Church would have no right to take from those who do not belong to the invisible Church, even if it knew

them to be reprobates, what God has given them. As it is the Church must regard them all as belonging to the invisible Church.

And the Church has in its midst hyprocrites, who in confession and life appear as upright, but are not such in reality, and of whom the Confession says, that they "are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church" (Art. 29). To remove them from the Church would require ability to render judgment concerning the heart, and lacking that ability the Church is unable to do anything against them.

From the presence of these two elements within the Church it is evident that the visible and invisible Church cannot be made to coincide, and that, as far as they are concerned, it is not the will of God that the Church should try to make these two groups coincide.

This does not mean, however, that we should have to accept the idea of the "People's Church." On the contrary. The visible Church is not a gathering of all kinds of people, but it is "an holy congregation of true Christian believers" (Confession, Art. 27). In the Scriptures the Churches with all those belonging to them are addressed as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. 1:2, as "called to be saints," Rom. 1:7, etc. It is the visible Church that is called "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession," 1 Pet. 2:9. Each Church must guard, therefore, to the extent that God has enabled it to so do, that this testimony can be given of it as a whole, and of all its members in particular. It must remove from its midst all those who are disobedient to the Covenant of God, who show themselves in word or deed to be unbelieving and godless persons, whenever, after patient and earnest admonition, they do not turn from their evil ways, 1 Cor. 5:13. In so far visible and invisible Church must coincide, that the visible Church does not tolerate any person as a member, who cannot be regarded as a member of the invisible Church.

1 Cor. 5:13b, Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.

261. **The Visible Church as an Institution of Grace.**—That the Church is an institution of grace, an institution for the extention of the Kingdom of God, is plainly taught in Scripture. According to Eph. 4:12 the Church is an institution "for the perfection of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ," and for that reason the Church, or "the Jerusalem that is above," is called "our mother," Gal. 4:26.

To the question, however, whether this means that the Church is as to its nature, as to its essence an institution of grace, different answers are given.

The Lutherans answer to this question in the affirmative. To

them the Church is essentially an institution of grace and nothing else. Local Churches are to them not revelations of the body of Christ, but simply religious societies for the propagation of the Gospel. Virtually the same is the answer of those who are of the opinion, that the Church should be a "People's Church," and that it should try to bring within its fold all the people in the midst of which it is established.

Over against these views the Reformed maintain that as to its nature, its essence, the Church is not an institution of grace but the body of Christ, as "an holy congregation of true Christian believers" (Confession, Art. 27), who are members of that body of which Christ is the Head, Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22b, 23; 4:15, 16. Therein the visible Church has its unity with the invisible Church, and to that fact it owes its benefits, for it could have no portion in the benefits of Christ, without having a portion in Christ Himself (Cf. §381). That the Church is an institution of grace does therefore not concern its essence but only its mission, just as to be a king does not concern the true nature of a person but only his position among men. The Church is an institution of grace in virtue of the fact that Christ has entrusted to it as His body the ministration of the Covenant of Grace. Without this mission the Church would remain what it is: the body of Christ.

This truth, that the Church is the body of Christ, is of great importance in itself, as it concerns the glory of the Church, and also in regard to its practical consequences. Where the Church is considered to be only an institution of grace, there is indifference in regard to organization and government of the Church and lack of Church discipline. There is no objection to have the Church governed by the State, and it is thought that in order to fulfil its mission the Church must gladly accept every one who presents himself for churchmembership, and must never apply censure, but try to gather and to keep as many under the beneficial influence of its ministering activity as possible.

Where, however, the Church is considered as the body of Christ, there the strong and settled conviction prevails, that organization and government of the Church must be in all respects in accordance with the ordinances of Christ, and that it is a holy duty of the Church to keep itself, i. e. the body of Christ, as pure and undefiled as possible. All the more because the well-being of the Church is in the interest of its mission to be an institution of grace, as there would be no faithful discharge of this mission if the Church became degenerate. For these reasons care is exercised in admitting persons to full membership and stress is laid on Church discipline when necessary, so that the body of Christ be not desecrated, nor "the Covenant of God be profaned, and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation" (Catechism, Qu. 82), as was the case in

the Church of Corinth, where "for this cause" many were weak, and sickly, and not a few slept (had died), 1 Cor. 11:30.

> Eph. 4:11, 12, And He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.
>
> Gal. 4:26, But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother.
>
> 1 Cor. 11:30, For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep.

262. **Organism and Institution of the Church.**—As was said in the preceding paragraph, the visible Church is according to its essence the body of Christ; and to this body is given the task of ministering the Covenant. In order to fulfill this task an organization was given to it. Just as every people, every society, every gathering of persons has need of organization to remain in existence instead of breaking up in confusion, and to reach a goal through efficient action, so the Church has need of an organization, and this organization we call its institution. Thus we distinguish between organism and institution of the Church, which distinction is not the same as that of visible and invisible Church.

This institution is not a human invention; it is not made by man but given of God. Its main part are the offices, and these are instituted by the Lord. As soon as the Covenant was established, the duty of ministering it was given to Abraham, Gen. 17:23; 18:19, and Isaac and Jacob have taken the same place. Subsequently the Lord gave priests, kings, and prophets, and in the time of the New Testament He gave the New Testament offices, Eph. 4:11. Public worship, Sacraments, Church assemblies, are also divine institutions. Thus is the Church bound by God to appear in the world in instituted form. Paul prescribed that in all places where congregations were organized, elders should immediately be appointed, Tit. 1:5.

The Church has need of this institution: a) to reveal the kingship of Christ, which is represented by the ruling office of the elders; b) for the regular and efficient performing of its task of ministering the Covenant; c) in order that all things in the Church be done decently and in order, 1 Cor. 14:40. In all these particulars the organism of the Church performs its duties through its institution. It is true that many powerful influences go forth from the organism itself to such an extent that the world does not realize by far what it owes to the Church in this way; but the Church must execute all work that belongs to its task through its institution.

The distinction between institution and organism of the Church is not the same as that between "the Church as institution and the Church as organism." Concerning this latter distinction it

may be observed: a) that it presents "the Church as organism" and "the Church as institution" as two different Churches, each having its own particular part of the mission of the Church. This cannot be true. The Church is one body of Christ, and besides, that "Church as institution" without the organism cannot be called "a Church." We can speak of body and soul of man, but we cannot speak of "man as body and man as soul;" b) a practical result of that distinction is that, since that "Church as organism" cannot fulfill a mission without an institution, in the place of the institution given by Christ to the Church for the performance of its task, man-made institutions (societies) are created.

263. **The Attributes of the Church.**—In the Apostolic Creed we confess: "I believe an (or one, as some versions have it) holy, catholic Church." In this article there are ascribed to the Church: unity, holiness, and catholicity (universality), and these three are called the "attributes" of the Church.

By the unity of the Church we mean that all the believers and their seed over the face of the entire earth, together with the believers of preceding ages, form a unity. Hence there is but one Church, which is always and everywhere the same, "joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same Spirit" (Confession, Art. 27).

The Church is holy since it is set apart from the world to be the Lord's own, dedicated to His service. And its members are a community of saints in Christ, not only as those who are set apart, but also as those who objectively possess a perfect holiness in Christ, and subjectively possess a partial holiness through the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

The Church is catholic because it is the Church of all times and places, ever including all that belongs to the body of Christ. In this sense it can also be called the only saving Church. The Roman Church unjustly calls itself both catholic and only saving. No single denomination has the right to do this, especially not one so decadent as the Roman Church.

264. **The Marks of the Church.**—When we speak of the unity of the Church this is done with a view to the inner unity in Christ. Externally it does not form a unity but is divided into various divisions or denominations, of which some are more, some less pure in doctrine, and still others so degenerated that they, as for instance the Unitarians, can not be regarded as belonging to the Christian Church. Now it is our duty before God to join if possible that Church which is the purest. For this reason we have need of marks, indicating what are essentials for judging the degree of purity of a denomination, and whether or not a denomi-

nation can be regarded as belonging to the Church of Christ. These marks, as mentioned in the Confession of faith, Art. 29, are:

1. Preaching pure doctrine, John 8:31, 32; 2 John :9.
2. Administration of the Sacraments according to the institution of Christ, John 15:14; Matt. 15:7-9.
3. Exercise of Church discipline, Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 16:17.

The first and second of these marks refer more directly to the Church as an institution of grace, and they who consider this to be entirely or almost entirely the essence of the Church limit the marks to these two. The third concerns the Church as the body of Christ. It is, however, of great importance for the Church as an institution of grace, as without it a Church would not long remain in possession of the other two, especially not of the second. Degeneration in a Church always begins with a weakening in discipline.

John 8:31, 32, Jesus therefore said to those Jews who had believed Him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

2 John :9, Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.

John 15:14, Ye are My friends if ye do the things which I command you.

Matt. 15:7-9, Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

Matt. 18:15-18, And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them tell it unto the Church: and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.

Rom. 16:17, Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them.

265. **These Marks and the Churches.**—If we apply the test of these marks we will find that there are true and false Churches, that among the first there is a difference as to the degree of purity, and that none is without defect. It does not follow, therefore, that a Church is to be rejected as soon as it shows faults and shortcomings in respect to one or more of these marks, for in that case we would have to reject them all. In the Church of Corinth there were many and very serious faults, but Paul did not think of rejecting it for that reason, or of admonishing the believers to leave it.

But there is a limit.

In Article 29 of our Confession we declare that a Church has degenerated into a false Church when "she ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit herself to the yoke of Christ, and persecutes those who live holily according to the Word of God."

266. **Causes of the Disunion of the Church.**—The one holy catholic Church is divided in a great number of special Churches or Denominations, and each special Church consists of a number of local Churches or congregations.

The cause of this latter division lies in our being limited by time and space. If it were possible all the members of a denomination would form one congregation under one Consistory and would gather for public worship on one place and at the same time. Then their unity as one body would most clearly manifest itself. This, however, is impossible and for that reason it is also impossible that all the members of a denomination should form one congregation. The communion of the saints requires that they can have intercourse with one another, can congregate at the same place for worship, can jointly partake of the Lord's Supper, etc., and this is only possible for a limited number of members in a local Church. Hence the absolute necessity of the division in local Churches, in such a way, however, that none the less all the members of a denomination remain one body of believers, united by the internal bonds of one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Eph. 4:4-6, and by external bonds of one Confession, one Church organization and government, one liturgical order of public worship. It is truly said, that each local Church is an individual revelation of the body of Christ, and at the same time a part of a larger whole (Bavinck).

As to the division in many special Churches or denominations, here the chief cause is undoubtedly sin, sin in the various forms of ignorance, error, wilfulness, intolerance, discord, quarrels, etc. If it were not for sin the Church would still be the one universal Church of the first centuries. If in the time of the Reformation Luther had been disposed as Calvin, then very likely the division into Lutheran and Reformed Churches would not have become a fact.

There are, however, circumstances that have to be taken into account as having contributed to this division in no small degree. We are strongly influenced by nationality, language, and history, and a real unity of spirit, a free and cordial intercourse, such as are necessary for the full communion of the saints are only possible in groups of members which are of the same nationality, speak the same language, and have been moulded by the same historical influences. Where there is difference in these respects separate existence as a Church is preferable to a unity which

would be more mechanical and external than real, and would endanger peace and concord in Church life.

Finally the fact that there is this division shows that it has been permitted by Him who is the King of the Church and to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and that He has therewith His holy purpose, also for the good of the Church.

We, no doubt, must always strive to have the inner unity of the Church, its unity in Christ, reveal itself in an external unity; and schismatizing is sin before God. But the present attempts, especially in our Country, to unite Churches with disregard of principles, is the opposite extreme. A Church union which would demand of us the sacrifice of important and Scriptural principles, cannot be according to the will of God. The instances in history of such Church unions show that they never bore salutory fruits.

267. **The Duty to Belong to the Church.**—The Confession of Faith devotes an entire article (Art. 28) to emphasize the duty of believers to belong to the Church. In that article we confess "that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it." And this they must do "even though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment."

This confession rests on good grounds, for: a) the Church is an institution of Christ, the revelation of His body. It, therefore, is an inestimable privilege to belong to such an institution. To refuse to be a member of it is to despise that privilege, to despise the body of Christ, to despise Christ Himself;—b) to the Church is entrusted the ministration of Word and Sacraments as means of grace, for which purpose offices and ordinances have been given to it "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." This implies that no one can disregard the Church and its ministration and fare well spiritually; that no one can continue to neglect and slight them and be saved. And he who is willing to attend its public worship and in so far be fed from its table, but is unwilling to belong to it, contradicts himself;—c) to the Church the Holy Spirit has been given to dwell in it and to remain with it eternally, so that whoever withdraws himself from its communion, withdraws himself from the communion of the Holy Spirit. These things hold true for the Church as instituted visible Church.

The duty to belong to the Church is a duty to belong to that Church which shows most clearly and purely the marks of the true Church of Christ.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

268. **The Members of the Church.**—The members of the Church are the believers who have joined it, with their seed. From Gen. 17:7, Joel 2:16, Acts 2:39, 1 Cor. 14 it is evident that the children of believers are also members of the Church. In virtue of the fact that the Lord has included not only believers in His Covenant but their seed as well, the latter are through their birth from believing parents members of the Church. They do not become so through making confession of faith but are born members of the Church; the Baptismal Form says of infants that they "as members of the Church ought to be baptized." This membership by Baptism is not an indefinite membership of the universal Church, but a definite membership of the Church to which their parents belong. The Church records their names in its membership book, and fulfills its task of ministering the Covenant to these children, not only by baptizing them, but also by teaching them presently and by including them under its care and discipline.

By virtue of being born of believing parents they are, therefore, because of God's Covenant ordinance, made members of the Church, but this is not sufficient to make them continue as covenant members and members of the Church, when they have reached years of discretion. For then they become subject to the obligations, the Covenant: faith and obedience. Then they must make confession of their faith, partake of the Lord's Supper, and walk in the ways of the Lord. If they do not do this, they become guilty of covenant-breaking, and it is the duty of the Church to remove covenant-breakers from its midst.

269. **Admission to the Lord's Supper.**—The obligations of the Covenant are: faith and obedience, Heb. 3:18, 19. In agreement with this the demand is made of those born as members of the Church, when they have come to years of discretion and before they are admitted to the Lord's Supper, that at a regular church service and in the presence of the congregation they confess their faith and promise obedience. Three questions are asked, and these are answered with "yes." As far as the confession of faith is concerned, this is unsatisfactory, and for this reason an investigation by the Consistory precedes it. This investigation has for its object to ascertain whether they who wish to be admitted to the Lord's Supper have a sufficient knowledge and understanding of the truth's of salvation and accept them believingly. If the results are satisfactory, then they are permitted by the Consistory to make public confession.

270. **The Confession of Faith.**—There is a difference of opinion

regarding this rite which has existed many centuries. In some districts of the Netherlands it is regarded as proper to become a confessing member of the Church when one is about twenty years of age, especially before entering the state of matrimony. There is no thought of connection of this act with the Covenant, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, nor is it admitted that it obliges one to partake of the Lord's Supper. The preceding investigation by the Consistory is considered as merely a kind of examination, from which it must appear that the catechetical classes have been attended with benefit. In such places there are no "adult members by Baptism," but there are many confessing members who continually neglect to partake of the Lord's Supper. The confession is spoken of, not as a confession of faith, but as a confession of truth.

In other districts confession of faith is conceived of as a confession of genuine regeneration and conversion, a confession which requires first of all the assurance to be a child of God. To be entirely satisfactory one must be able to relate the story of his conversion. When this can be done nothing more is necessary; no ignorance concerning the truths of salvation can hinder from admitting him to the Lord's table. In such districts many "adult members by Baptism" are found, but whoever has made confession of faith usually partakes of the Lord's Supper.

The true conception is expressed in the term "confession of faith," which means declaring oneself concerning the truth of salvation, not as truths which we know merely, but as truths which we believe. Knowledge of these truths is necessary because in order to believe them we must know them, but the main thing is not that we know them, but that we believe them. When those who wish to make confession of faith are examined by the Consistory the questions are intended, not to give them an opportunity to show their knowledge, but to confess their faith; and they must give the proper answers, not as what they are taught, but as what they believe. And when they make public confession of faith, the question asked them is:

> Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

The investigation by the consistory usually is made in accordance with the Compendium, which in brief treats the three subjects of misery, deliverance, and thankfulness. To confess belief in the truths included in these three subjects does not merely mean to believe that man is by nature miserable, that he can be saved through Christ, and then has reason to be thankful to God; but that one realizes himself to be miserable, that he seeks

salvation in Christ, and that he desires to serve the Lord. If these three truths are known as personal experience it is evident that our faith is a truly living faith, and therefore we can make confession of our faith. But where this is lacking, there is no genuine faith and no confession of faith is possible.

By stating that in making confession of faith the main thing is not knowledge but faith, we did not mean to intimate, however, that in this matter knowledge is insignificant. On the contrary. As has been said already, faith includes knowledge. Knowledge of the truths of salvation is an integral part of faith in the truths of salvation. They cannot be believed unless they are known. Besides, knowledge is necessary to take one's place as an adult member of the Church and to derive true benefits from the preaching of the Word and the use of the Sacraments. The Consistory cannot admit to the Lord's Supper those who are very ignorant. Persons who do not know what the Lord's Supper signifies, what it means to discern the Lord's body, or how one must examine himself, are in great danger to partake unworthily, and if they do, the Consistory who admitted them would be responsible.

271. **The Promise of Obedience.**—This part of the rite for admission to the Lord's Supper is required by the second demand of the Covenant, that of obedience, and consists in the act of taking upon oneself that obligation by promising to be obedient in doctrine and conduct, and in subjection to Church government and discipline. It is therefore no less important than the confession of faith. The questions used for this purpose are, with a few minor changes, the same ones that were proposed by Voetius in one of his works. They are as follows:

> Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?
>
> Will you submit to church government, and in case you should become delinquent, to Church discipline?

272. **Significance of this Act in Connection with Covenant, Baptism, and Lord's Supper.**—To make public confession of faith is practically declaring publicly that we:

1) Accept God's Covenant and His Baptism. Accept His Covenant in which He had included us as His possession, to belong to Him and to serve Him, to be His children and heirs, to provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit; and accept his Baptism wherein God had witnessed and sealed this all to us by: a) joining the Church and people of God from voluntary choice and desire; — b) accepting the obligations of the Covenant and of Baptism, by confessing our faith, and promising obedience.

2) Wish to be admitted to the Lord's Supper in obedience to the demands of the Covenant and to enjoy a benefit of the Covenant. For by virtue of the unity of the sacraments, the acceptance of the first sacrament, which one has already received, is a declaration of the desire to receive also the sign and seal of the second sacrament.

Therefore making confession of our faith is taking upon us the yoke of Christ, Matt. 11:29.

The promise to lead a new and holy life includes the promise to partake of the Lord's Supper. For in this matter we cannot act as we please; it is a command of the Lord, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25, so that whoever does not do so is disobedient and does not lead a new and pious life. In view of the fact, however, that this is not understood by all, it is well for the Consistory to demand of everyone making confession the promise to partake of the Lord's Supper.

And as to the Church, the admission of a person by the Consistory is the acknowledgment on the part of the Church that he as a believing covenant member is entitled to the rights of adult believers, and to share in all the prerogatives of the covenant people.

> Matt. 11:29, 30, Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.
>
> 1 Cor. 11:24, 25, And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said: This is My body, which is for you: do this in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.

273. **The Age at which This Should Be Done.**—The age suitable for confession is the age of discretion, i. e. when one has come to that stage in life that he knows the difference between right and wrong sufficiently to occupy the place of a mature believer. Formerly in both Churches of the Reformation 14 years was regarded as the end of the period of childhood. In the Lutheran Church the 15th year is still the one in which as a rule the youth are "confirmed." And that the Reformed Churches were of the same opinion in this respect is evident from the decision of the Synod of Dort 1618, '19, that boys and girls of 15 years of age could not be baptized without confession of faith, save in special cases. According to the Church Order of the Reformer, A. Lasco, young people should make confession in the period from the 16th to the 18th year of their life. He who had not done so then, was to be made the object of special labor until the time of his 20th year, and then, if this also remained fruitless, was to be formally excommunicated.

One person is mature before another. Experience teaches that covenant members who have by the grace of God been kept from leading offensive lives, as a rule come to definite decisions at the age of 16 to 18 years, and that, if they do not come to confession of faith in that period, the following years are characterized rather by retrogression than by progress, so that it often takes years before they make confession.

It surely is not a matter in which one may act as he pleases. He who has learned to appreciate the rich grace which has come to him by being included in the Covenant of Grace, will feel to what high degree it is his duty to appropriate this grace without delay, instead of acting as if it were doubtful whether it is worthy of being accepted. He who has come to years of discretion has no alternative than to accept or reject God's grace. It is impossible to do neither the one nor the other. Not to accept is to reject it as not worthy of acceptance.

274. **Treatment of Those who do not Make Confession of Faith.** —From places such as Jer. 3:14 it is evident how great is the longsuffering of God with regard to covenant-breakers. To those who because of their stiff-necked disobedience had already been driven from Canaan and dwelt in captivity, He announced that from His side His Covenant with them was still in force, admonishing them on the basis of this Covenant to conversion, and promising them that He then would again accept them in grace and bring them back to Zion. Still it is a question if the Church may show such longsuffering. The Lord Himself had commanded the Old Testament Covenant people to act differently. Those who broke the Covenant publicly by not permitting themselves to be circumcised, Gen. 17:14, or by not celebrating the Passover, Num. 9:13, were to be exterminated from among them. And according to the ordinances of Deut. 13:6-10 these same idolators, to whom in Jer. 3:14 such grace is offered, should have been stoned long before. The Lord is sovereign, also in His longsuffering; but the Church is duty bound to keep his Covenant and ordinances holy. Therefore, longsuffering may and can be shown, and this can be done the more because the full privileges of the Church are withheld from "adult members by Baptism." But if those who delay making confession are zealously labored with and yet do not show any fruits of this labor, their disobedience may not continually be tolerated.

The fact that they cannot make an honest confession, because they have no saving faith may not be regarded as something which they cannot help and for which they are not responsible, for the Lord Himself judges otherwise. We see from Is. 5:4; Luke 13:6-9; Jer. 8:22 that, because of the special work which He had per-

formed on them, He expects fruit from them, and from other places that He holds them responsible, threatening them with many stripes, with a more severe judgment. Therefore the Church must also hold them responsible, and must treat them as it must treat those "who by confession and life declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly." Our Synod of 1918 declared:

> Those baptized in infancy, having arrived to years of discretion, but that do not make profession of faith, regardless of their walk otherwise, become, as unfaithful baptized members, the objects of church discipline, and if they persist in their sin, are to be excluded from the church.

It is difficult to determine upon a definite age for this exclusion from the Church. A. Lasco was of the opinion that it was not permitted to wait further than the twentieth year; in our time 25 years of age and even 30 years has been proposed as a limit. Cases differ greatly, and the best thing will undoubtedly be to leave this matter to the Consistory. But without doubt many would reach a decision sooner, if discipline was used in regard to them, even though they give offense in no other way. This concerns especially those who are not careless in this matter, but are held back by all kinds of wrong ideas; some even regarding their neglect as a sort of piety, imagining that they take these matters more seriously than others.

275. **The Terms: "Accepting New Members," "Confirming New Members,"** etc.—These terms arose in the early years of the preceding century, when the Reformed doctrine had been replaced by Rationalism and Supranaturalism, and the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace was ignored or forgotten. Consequently the rite of making public confession of faith had also lost its true Reformed meaning, and was considered as that of "accepting new members" and of their "confirmation" as such, and, since it had been emptied of its meaning, all the more had to be made of externalities. It was made an occasion of special festivities, enhanced with flowers and garlands, with music and ringing of church bells, with emotional orations and a solemn oath with the hand on the Bible.

When the expressions "accepting new members" or "being accepted as a member," and also that of "to join the Church" are used in regard to persons who hitherto stood outside of the Church, the case is different. But they are decidedly to be disapproved of in regard to the rite as such and in regard to persons who are born members of the Church, since they contain virtually a denial of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace.

The term "confirmation" ("bevestiging") was borrowed from the Roman and Lutheran Churches. The Roman Catholics consider the "confirmation" of young people as members of their

Church as one of their seven Sacraments, and the Lutherans, who retained that appellation, also attach to it a certain sacramental significance, as an act by which grace is imparted (Cf. §325). In order to guard ourselves against such wrong conceptions, we have to avoid terms which convey them. For us the rite has no other meaning than that of making a public confession of personal faith, at the same time engaging oneself to obedience in accordance with the Covenant obligations, thus publicly accepting the Covenant and its obligations, and in consequence thereof being admitted to the Lord's Supper and to all the rights of full membership.

276. **Criterion for Judging whether the Confession is Satisfactory.**—After the investigation by the Consistory, the latter must decide whether it will permit the confessor to the public confession. The question is, whether the confession can be accepted as a confession of true faith. This question must be decided according to the confessor's statements, provided these statements are not contradicted by his life and conduct, and according to these data alone. It is an old adage that the Church does not judge the heart. In this manner the Apostles must have acted in baptizing the converts on Pentecost, and Philip in baptizing the eunuch and Simon the Sorcerer. Confession and life are the only things concerning which the Consistory can judge; to these things, therefore, it has to limit its judgment, without making any attempt to judge of the heart. If in this way the Consistory is misled by a hypocritical confession, as Philip was misled by that of Simon the Sorcerer, the responsibility rests with the confessor. And when his delusion becomes evident, the way to deal with him is not that of annulling his confession, but that of applying church discipline. Likewise in case of Baptism after confession of faith has been made, such Baptism is valid as a seal of being accepted in the Covenant of Grace, even if the confession was that of a hypocrite.

277. **Letters of Dismission.**—When members of a local Church depart to other places, their membership is transferred to the Church of the place where they went by means of a "letter of dismission," furnished by the Consistory. Such a letter of dismission is not a certificate of membership, which a person can carry around in his pocket, but specifically a letter for the transfer of membership from one Church to another. It contains a testimony concerning faith and conduct of bearer or bearers, a commendation to the Christian fellowship of that other Church, and a request to the Consistory of that Church "to take them under their supervision and in all cases to serve them with Christian counsel." In virtue of the unity of the Church such a letter must as a rule be accepted, and its bearers be admitted to membership, unless a Consistory has weighty and lawful reasons to act otherwise.

If such a letter is not handed in within a year, it loses its value, so that such a person ceases to be a member of the Church. If any one departs to a place where there is no Christian Reformed Church, he can remain a member in the Church to which he hitherto belonged, or can have his membership transferred to the Church nearest to the place where he went to reside.

Whether letters of dismission are to be handed to the departing members themselves, or may be sent directly to the Church where they intend to go, is in itself a matter of minor importance. But we decidedly disagree when it is asserted that departing members have a right to require that the letter shall be given in their own hands, because their membership is a matter of their personal rights, over which the Consistory has no authority. In our opinion it is Christ who has the absolute authority over Church membership, as it is a membership of His Church, of His body. Consequently the Consistory has authority over it on His behalf, as being entrusted by Him to rule His Church. It is therefore the Consistory who admits to full membership, after having examined the persons and having judged concerning their confession and conduct. Likewise the Consistory has authority to deprive of membership by excommunication, acting in that case, as is expressly stated in the liturgical Form for that purpose, as "ministers and rulers of the Church of God, being assembled in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ." And so is transfer of membership a matter belonging to the authority of the Consistory.

Letters of dismission can be granted only to those who desire to hand them in to one of our own local Churches or to those of a few other denominations mentioned by name in the Church Rules. In other cases a testimony as to character and conduct may be given, but no more. This seems rather narrow minded. Fact is, however, that no Consistory can conscientiously transfer members, as if everything were in order, to Churches against whose doctrine, worship, or discipline it has serious objections.

To persons who have to do much journeying testimonials can be given in which it is simply stated that they are members of the Church in good and regular standing, in order to enable them to introduce themselves as such to other Consistories, and to partake occasionally of the Lord's Supper. Such testimonials can rightly be called certificates of membership.

THE CHURCH OFFICES

278. **The Different Church Offices.**—In §§ 201 and 202 we have described the Character of an office in regard to the Offices of Christ. We also made mention of the fact that there are offices in the Church as well as in the State, and that in the Church the

office-bearers are servants of Christ in a special sense for the performance of His prophetical, priestly, and kingly work in the Church. Thus they have a task to perform, which belongs to the Mediatorial work of Christ, and are vested with authority to accomplish this task in the name of Christ.

These Church offices are extraordinary or ordinary offices.

1. **The extraordinary offices** are those which existed only in the first century of the Christian Church and of which we read in the Acts and the Epistles. They were the offices of Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists of those times.

a. **The Apostles** were chosen by the Lord and were destined to be His witnesses, Luke 24:48; John 15:27, and as such to bring His Word and teaching to the world through preaching and letter, and to this end they were endowed with the Holy Spirit to such a degree that they were infallible in their doctrines and ordinances, John 14:26. In this sense they were the founders of the Christian Church, Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14; and it is through their word that we believe in Christ, John 17:20.

The marks of Apostleship were: a) to be chosen and ordained immediately by Christ Himself, Gal. 1:1;—b) to be witnesses of His journeyings on earth, of His words and deeds, John 15:27, and especially of His resurrection, Acts 1:21, 22;—c) to have received the Holy Spirit to such a degree as to be infallible in teaching and writing, John 14:26; 1 Cor. 14:37.

In a few instances the term apostle is used in a wider sense. In Acts 14:14 Barnabas is called an Apostle, and in Phil. 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:23 the term is used in the sense of "messenger of the Church."

Luke 24:48, Ye are witnesses of these things.

John 15:27, And ye also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.

John 14:26, But the Comforter, even the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.

Eph. 2:20, Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone.

Rev. 21:14, And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

John 17:20, Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word.

Gal. 1:1, Paul, an Apostle not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.

Acts 1:21, 22, Of the men therefore that have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning with the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of His resurrection.

1 Cor. 14:37, If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things that I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.

b. **Prophets** were those who had received a special gift of expounding the Scriptures to the end thereby to edify the Church. Their task, therefore, was not, as was that of the prophets of the Old Testament, to bring new revelations to the Church, but to explain the revelation of God already given. Occasionally they foretold future events (Agabus, Acts 11:28; 21:20).

c. **Evangelists** were assistants of the Apostles, men qualified for this task by the Holy Spirit. Thus Philip, Acts 21:8, and Timothy, 2 Tim. 4:5, are called Evangelists; and others such as Barnabas, Silas, Luke were active in the same manner. Recently the position has been defended that the office of Evangelist is to be regarded not as an extraordinary but as an ordinary office for the work of Heathen Missions.

2. **The ordinary offices** are those that have ever existed in the Church and that shall continue so unto the end. These are the offices of Ministers of the Word, Elders and Deacons. In the first Christ continues His prophetical, in the second His kingly, and in the third His priestly work. To the Ministers, therefore, is given the task of teaching and ministering the Word and Sacraments, to the Elders that of ruling, and to the Deacons that of caring for the poor. This distinction is not to be regarded in such a manner that it would seem as if one office had nothing to do with the duties of the other. The Elders should be shepherds as well as the Ministers, Acts 20:28, and the Ministers are as well qualified to rule as are the Elders, 1 Tim. 5:17. And thus also can the Deacons be given part in the task of ruling. There is an organic unity in the offices of Christ, and this unity is shown in a beautiful manner in the Consistory, in which the three offices are united in one whole.

Acts 20:28, Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops to feed the Church of the Lord which He purchased with His own blood.

1 Tim. 5:17, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and in teaching.

279. **Threefold Church Power.**—The instituting of these three offices teaches that the Lord has given to the Church a threefold power, i. e. the power of teaching in His name, Luke 10:16; the power of ruling in His name, Matt. 18:18; and the power of showing mercy in His name, Acts 6:2-4, all in conformity to His Word.

Luke 10:16, He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth Me; and he that rejecteth Me rejecteth Him that sent Me.

Matt. 18:18, Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Acts 6:2-4, And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto

them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the Word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out, therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of Wisdom, whom ye may appoint over this business. But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the World.

280. **The Ministry of the Word.**—The task of the Ministers is to explain and apply the Holy Scriptures before the Congregation; to do this more definitely for the adult in the preaching of the Word, and for the children in the catechetical classes, in each case according to particular needs, in order that the adults may be persuaded to believe or may be strengthened in their faith, and that the children may be instructed in the teaching of the Covenant and may be lead in the way of the Covenant. To the ministry of the Word is joined that of the Sacraments.

Furthermore, to the teaching power of the Church belongs the qualification for composing Doctrinal Standards, for studying Theology, and for educating for the ministry of the Word. The first is to give account of its faith and to have a bond of unity against all manner of error; the second is to gain an ever deeper insight into Scripture; and the third is to supply its need for capable ministers of the Gospel, 2 Tim. 2:2.

2 Tim. 2:2, And the things that thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

281. **The Ruling Office. Systems of Church Government.**—The Ruling Office is that of governing the Church in Christ's name and according to His ordinances. There are different systems of Church government. In the main these four:

1. **The Hierarchical or Episcopal system** of the Roman Catholics and the Episcopalians, according to which the authority rests with the office-bearers as such. These have greater or lesser authority according to their rank, but the authority of each rank rests in the office-bearer personally.

2. **The Territorial system** of the Lutherans, which considers the ecclesiastical authority to pertain to the civil authorities.

3. **The Independent system** of the Congregationalists or Independents and the Baptists, who are of the opinion that the authority in the Church pertains to the congregation, i. e. to the people. Another feature of this system is, that each local congregation is regarded as completely independent and possessed to full authority. Independents reject the idea of an organic unity of their Churches and of the right of Classical and Synodical assemblies to exercise authority over the local Churches.

4. **The Presbyterian-Synodical** system of the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, according to which the ecclesiastical

authority is in the hands of the Elders, not personally, but jointly, in their Consistorial, Classical, and Synodical assemblies, with the right of approbation and appeal of the people. The local Churches are considered in this system as separate revelations of the body of Christ, but at the same time forming with all the local Churches of the denomination one organic whole, one body. Each local Church, therefore, has a separate existence and is at the same time an integral part of that body. Each local Church is a self-governing Church, having the right to direct its own affairs (autonomy), and the same is true of every Classical or Synodical group of Churches. This autonomy, however, is not absolute. It extends as far as the general welfare of the Church permits, and it is limited as far as this general welfare requires.

282. **Chief Principles of Reformed Church Government.**—The chief principles of our Church government, as revealed in the Word of God, are:

1. **The absolute kingship of Christ over the Church.** The Church is not a democracy, not a republic, but a Kingdom, an absolute monarchy, in which no other authority has any significance save that of Christ alone, Is. 33:22.

2. **The mediate government of the Church through the Elders.** It has pleased Christ to use men for the government of His Church, and for this purpose He has instituted the office of Eldership. The Elders, therefore, have authority to rule in behalf of Christ, not personally, but jointly. In Scripture the Elders are called "bishops," appointed by the Holy Spirit over the Church, Acts 20:28; it speaks of "elders who rule well," 1 Tim. 5:17, and of "government" in the Church as instituted by God, 1 Cor. 12:28; it ascribes to them the power to bind and to loose, Matt. 18:18; and demands of the believers to "obey them that rule over you, and submit to them," Heb. 13:17.

3. **The ministerial character of ecclesiastical authority in regard to Christ.** The ruling office is a means through which Christ rules His Church. It may not rule, therefore, as it sees fit, but in all its acts it is strictly bound to the Word of God, to the ordinance of Christ. Ministerial in regard to Christ, however, does not mean: ministerial (serving) also with regard to the people. In regard to the Congregation the ecclesiastical authority is authority indeed, Heb. 13:17, an authority to rule, 2 Tim. 5:15. It can be called ministerial in regard to the Congregation only in so far as this authority is given for the sake of the building up of the body of Christ. In this sense Paul speaks to the Corinthians of himself and his co-laborers as "your servants for Jesus' sake," 2 Cor. 4:5.

4. **The anti-hierarchical character of ecclesiastical authority in regard to the Congregation.** The Elders may not rule the Congregation as if it were still immature and bound to tacit obedience, but they have to rule it in accordance with its rights of freedom and of maturity, since Christ by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has granted freedom and maturity to the New Testament Church. No ecclesiastical authority may encroach upon these rights, and no believers may suffer themselves to be deprived of them, Matt. 20:25f; 1 Pet. 5:3.

These rights, however, may not be interpreted as rights of ecclesiastical ruling power belonging to the people, as rights of control or supervision over the Consistory, as if the Congregation were set over the Consistory instead of the Consistory being set over the Congregation, Acts 20:28, and as if the Consistory is ultimately to be governed by the Congregation instead of the Congregation by the Consistory. Such an interpretation of these rights is Congregational, not Reformed, and in the line of a sovereignty of the people in the Church.

The ecclesiastical rights of the believers are of a different nature. They are not rights to rule, but rights to stand up for their spiritual freedom in Christ and to defend it. This freedom consists in their being subject to Christ alone, and in consequence of this privilege they may not suffer themselves "to be entangled again in a yoke of bondage," Gal. 5:1. Such a yoke of bondage would be a Church government that does not characterize itself as a government of Christ Himself, not being conformable to His ordinances. So, as believers who have come to maturity, to the discretion of good and evil, they have the right to judge the actions of the Consistory, and to bring objections before the Consistory and eventually by way of appeal before Classis and Synod.

These maturity rights of the believers have been presented as belonging to the so-called "office of the believers" ("ambt der geloovigen"), "office" then being explained as to have the same meaning as in "Church office," this "office of the believers" being even the ground from which the Church offices proceeded and on which they rest. In Art. 28 of the Confession, however, the expression, "fidelium officium" means only "le devoir," the bounden duty (cf. Dr. Rutgers' note in his edition of the Confession), the same as "the office of the President" in Art. 35 of the Church Order; in our English translation of the Confession it is rightly rendered as "the duty of the believers." And the Catechism ascribes to the participation of the believers of Christ's anointing only a spiritual, not a Church political significance (Qu. 32). To derive the Eldership from the general priesthood of the believers is Lutheran teaching, but, as a competent writer on Reformed

Church Polity assures us, "of this not the slightest trace is to be found, neither Calvin, nor with his followers, nor in any Reformed Church Order" (Rieker, Grundsatze, etc., p. 139).

Is. 33:22, For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; He will save us.

Gal. 5:1, For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

Matt. 20:25f., But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you.

2 Cor. 4:5, For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

1 Pet. 5:3, Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock.

283. **These Principles and the Different Systems of Church Government.** From these principles, which are taught in the scriptures, it follows:

1. That the Hierarchical or Episcopalian system is to be rejected as conflicting with the Word of God and with the absolute sovereignty of Christ. It is true that it does recognize a ruling office instituted by Christ, but it gives to this ruling office a character other than that which is in agreement with the institution of Christ, for: a) it regards the authority of the office bearers as something with which they are clothed as individuals and which is inherent in their persons, so that they form a special class in the Church, a class of rulers; while Scripture teaches that the Church is an organism, and that authority is given to the office bearers, not as individuals, but as members of that body, which are there because of the body, and can function only in virtue of their unity with the body; so that through them the Church as an organized body "builds up itself in love, Eph. 4:16.—b) It ascribes to the office bearers the right of exercising their authority on their own initiative; while the Scriptures teach that in each Church provisions must ever be made to a number of elders (more than one in each Church), so that it evidently is the will of the Lord that the ruling power must never be in the hands of one person alone, but that the ecclesiastical authority shall be exercised by the elders jointly, with mutual consult and consent, gathered together in Church assemblies: Consistories, Classes, and Synods. —c) It divides the office bearers into ranks and orders, higher and lower, with greater or lesser authority, the higher exercising authority over the lower, while Christ has said: One is your teacher, even Christ; and ye are all brethren, Matt. 23:8; it rules the Church as if it were immature. This system is therefore in conflict with the first, third, and fourth principles.

Eph. 4:16, From whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in

due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building of itself in love.

2. That the Lutheran system, which places the authority of the Church in the hands of the civil government, must be rejected as being in conflict with the Word of God and with the absolute sovereignty of Christ. For since Christ has instituted a ruling office, no Church may suffer itself to be ruled by the civil authorities, as this involves a denial of this ordinance of Christ and of His absolute Kingship over the Church.

3. That the system of the Independents is to be rejected for the same reason. For since Christ has instituted a ruling office, the Church members have no right to lay claim to this ruling for themselves, and to introduce in the realm of the Church a sovereignty of the people. A congregational meeting may not regard itself as a Church assembly, vested with ecclesiastical authority, and qualified for Church government. The rights of believers, as presented in the fourth principle (§282) are not rights to rule, but rights of an essentially different nature.

4. That our Presbyterial-synodical system is in agreement with these principles and accordingly with the Word of God and with the absolute Kingship of Christ, for the reason that it: a) Recognizes the ruling office as a divine institution, and will tolerate no other authority in the Church, not of the civil government nor of the people. — b) Binds the ruling office to the ordinances of Christ, so that it may not infringe upon His government, and may not place itself in His stead. — c) Does not permit the office bearers to exercise their power severally, each one on his own initiative, but places this authority in the Church assemblies. — d) Rejects all orders and ranks among the office bearers, and therefore does not tolerate any authority of office bearers over other office bearers, nor of Consistories over Consistories, Classes over Classes, Particular Synods over Particular Synods. — e) Maintains the rights of the Congregation as a mature body. In acknowledgment of these rights important actions and decisions of the Consistory are made known to the Church members, opportunity is given to them to enter objections and complaints if they have them; such objections or complaints are seriously considered by the Consistory, and, if the answer of the Consistory does not satisfy them, they have the right to appeal to Classis and Synod.

284. **Duties of the Ruling Office.**—The ruling office has the authority and is called: a) to make such Church rules and regulations as are necessary for the maintenance of good order, which includes the right to stipulate a Church Manual; — b) to maintain and execute these regulations; — c) to watch the Congregation; — d) to exercise Church discipline.

Under the Old Testament dispensation everything that belonged to Church life was prescribed into the minutest detail, but the Lord has not done so for the Church of the New Testament dispensation. We do not find in the Scriptures a sufficient number of prescribed rules to build therefrom a Church Manual. We find the few rules such as those of Matt. 18:15-17, Matt. 23:8, 1 Tim. 5:19, 20, and further certain general principles, but no more. From this it follows that the Church of the New Testament, since the Holy Spirit has been granted to it and since it has arrived at maturity and freedom and is destined to become a world-church, has received the right to make provision itself according to the needs of the time, always, however, in agreement with the Scriptures. Such principles are: a. that each provision must serve for the maintenance of good order, for in the Church all things must "be done decently and in order," 1 Cor. 14:40; b. that each provision must serve toward the promotion of the welfare of the Church, for the church power is given "for building up, and not for casting down," 2 Cor. 13:10, "unto the building up of the body of Christ," Eph. 4:12; c. that the Christian liberty of the believers may not be encroached upon, and that they may not be laden down with arbitrary rules, Gal. 5:1.

> Matt. 18:15-17, And if thy brother sin against thee, etc.
>
> Matt. 23:8, But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren.
>
> 1 Tim. 5:19, 20, Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest may also be in fear.
>
> Gal. 5:1, For freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

285. **The Authority of the Church Manual.**—The authority of a Church manual, which is in agreement with these principles, is human, and even changeable, for that which serves toward the promotion of order and welfare can change with time and circumstances, and thus an ecclesiastical provision can lose its significance and authority. Nevertheless, where such a Church Manual was made by virtue of a power given of Christ, and which, as far as its content is concerned, is in agreement with the Word of God, and therefore is expressive of the will of the King, there divine authority is not excluded, and the believers must, for Christ's sake, submit themselves to it. It is therefore correctly said in the Church Manual itself, that whatever by the Church assemblies "may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by a General Synod," Art. 31.

286. **The Deaconship.**—The office of deacon is the office of mercy in which Christ continues His priestly work, and in which the Church gives evidence of its love, as in the office of the ministry it gives evidence of its faith. The right to speak of the "authority" of the Church to exercise mercy lies in the fact that the care of the poor is exercised in Christ's name, and differs in that respect from private charity. No one can have the right to do anything on behalf of Christ unless he is authorized thereto by Christ Himself. Those who are cared for through this office, are cared for by Christ Himself through the Church. By the institution of a special Church office for charity He has made this fact the more evident. By that institution He has made also provision against neglect of the poor, and for having them cared for systematically and efficiently. The Church should regard care for the poor one of its dearest prerogatives, and not leave it to the state.

287. **The Call to an Office.**—Since all action as an office bearer in the Church is action in Christ's name, in Christ's own work, no one can be qualified thereto without being called by Christ Himself. Therefore, for an office bearer it is first of all necessary to be called to an office in a manner which shows that he is called by Christ, so that he himself and also the Church can be assured of that fact. This calling is internal and external. The first is a calling from Christ through the Holy Spirit, and the second is a calling from Christ through the Church; the first is a subjective, the second an objective calling. The latter is for the person concerned a confirmation of his internal calling, and for the Church a testimony that he is called by Christ: "lawfully called of God's Church and therefore of God Himself."

The internal calling does not take place through an extraordinary revelation, or through a special experience, or anything of that sort, but simply through this, that the Holy Spirit works in the heart a desire for a certain office, a desire to serve the Lord and His Church in that capacity. This "desiring" an office is mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:1, and nothing more is ever demanded in the Scriptures.

The external calling is the calling of the Church, i. e. of the Consistory with the co-operation of the Congregation for the offices in the local Church.

Those who have a desire to serve as Elder or Deacon are not greatly in need of certainty regarding their being internally called before they are externally called, but with those who wish to become Minister of the Gospel the case is different. This office requires a long period of preparation, so that such persons are in need of as much certainty as possible concerning their internal calling long before there is a possibility of an external call. With

a view to this difficulty the following marks have been presented as signs for a true internal calling to the Ministry: a) If we find that the desire is persistent, so that we cannot put it from us even though we try, and that it does not come from a desire for external advantages which we think the office will bring us, but from the desire to serve God's Kingdom in the work of the Gospel and the salvation of souls. — b) If we may have the conviction that certain necessary gifts, such as fear of God, desire and ability for study, a fairly good voice, etc., are not lacking. For if these should be lacking, then this would be proof sufficient that the Lord had not destined us for this office, while the presence thereof may be taken in connection with the other marks as a sign that the Lord has destined and equipped us for the work. — c) If we see that in the way of God's Providence the opportunity for being educated for this office is granted us. For in this respect the same holds true as with the presence or absence of the necessary gifts. Both cases refer to evidences of the Providence of God.

Certainty concerning our internal calling is only possible when the Lord causes us to receive an external call, which, as a call of God's Church and therefore of God Himself," sets its seal upon the internal call. And if before that time we may know that in preparing ourselves for the Ministry we are in the way of the Lord, that knowledge is then sufficient for us.

1 Tim. 3:1, Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

288. **Election to the Office.**—Election to the office in the local Church pertains, as an act of Church government, and a very important act of Church government, to the Consistory with the approbation of the confessing male members of the Church. This approbation is necessary since it would be contrary to their rights of maturity, if an office bearer were forced upon them by the Consistory. If this co-operation on the part of the Congregation assumes the form of permitting it to vote, then this voting must be done under the guidance of the Consistory and from a nomination made by the Consistory. Such a voting is a modified form of the approbation prescribed in Articles 4, 5, and 22 of the Church Order.

Free voting is a) in conflict with the examples of election to an office in the New Testament; — b) fostering the idea of a sovereignty of the people in the Church instead of recognizing the Kingship of Christ; — c) Virtually an act of ignoring the divine institution of the ruling office, as such free voting takes the government from the hands of the Elders to whom it was given by the Lord, to lay it in the hands of the people; — d) dangerous for

the welfare of the Church, because the prudence and consideration which are possible in making a nomination, are impossible with free voting.

THE CHURCH ASSEMBLIES

289. **Three Church Assemblies.**—There are three Church Assemblies: those of the Consistories, Classes and Synods. Synods are either Particular Synods, the Synods of certain Church districts, meeting every year, or General Synods, the Synods of the whole Church, usually meeting every two or three years. Our Church has not yet thought it advisable to institute Particular Synods, and therefore has only General Synods which meet biannually.

290. **The Consistories.**—The Consistory is the institution for Church government in the local Church. A local Church is a separate revelation of the body of Christ, and is therefore autonomous, i. e. self ruling, at least to the extent permitted by its own welfare and the unity and welfare of the Church as a whole. For this autonomy in the Reformed sense is not to be regarded as an autonomy in the sense of the Independents, since it is limited in various ways. The Church Order ascribes to the Classis jurisdiction over the Consistory, just as it ascribes jurisdiction to the Synod over the Classis (Art. 36), and in accordance therewith it provides: a) that in matters of local interest the Consistories have to act in conformity with the Church Order, maintaining it in all things (Art. 44), and not changing anything therein (Art. 86); — b) that the Classis must exercise supervision over the local Churches through Church visitation (Art. 44) and investigation on the Classical meetings (Art. 41); — c) that with respect of various acts as calling a minister, exercising discipline the Consistory must ask for the advice or consent of the Classis (Art. 4, 5, 11, 77, 79); — d) that the members of the Congregation have the right of appeal. These are all provisions whereby the autonomy of the local Church is limited. On the other hand the Church order also provides against the degenerating of ecclesiastical authority into a domination of the major assemblies over the minor assemblies by denying to the major assemblies the right to act upon matters belonging to the minor assemblies, unless the latter cannot dispose of them. In this manner the way in which the major assemblies might encroach upon the authority of the minor assemblies is cut off, and the autonomy of the latter maintained.

291. **The Major Assemblies.**—The major assemblies (Classes and Synods) are the institutions for Church government for the

common interests of the Congregations of a classical division or of the entire Church. Through these assemblies the Reformed system of Church government, while acknowledging the individuality of the local Churches, maintains the unity of the Church as one body. Accordingly it is correct to use for the Church as a whole both the plural "Churches," Reformed Churches," and the singular "Church," Reformed Church." In former days both terms were used.

As a rule only those can be members of the major assemblies who serve as Ministers and Elders in the local Church, and have been delegated by the minor assembly.

The authority of the major assemblies as far as its nature is concerned is essentially the same as that of the Consistories, for these assemblies are indeed "Nothing but combined Consistories." The fact that they have jurisdiction over the lesser assemblies is not due to any higher authority, in a hierarchical sense, but to the significance which must ever, because of good order, be ascribed to the majority over the minority. In a Classis a number of Consistories are gathered together, and for this reason its authority, as the joint authority of that number, although, of course, not of a higher order, carries more weight than that of the separate Consistories, so that, when it is exercised in accordance with Art. 30 and 31 of the Church Order, the latter have to submit to it on the same principle as that according to which every gathering the minority has to submit to the majority. The same is true with a Synod in comparison to a Classis.

The ecclesiastical assemblies may discuss only ecclesiastical matters, and in an ecclesiastical manner. And to the larger assemblies only those matters may be brought: a) which could not be disposed of in the lesser assemblies, cases of appeal being included under this; — b) which are the common interest of the Congregations belonging to the Classis or Synod, Church Order, Arts. 30, 31.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

292. **The Power and Duty of the Church with respect to this.**— That the Church has the power and is called to exercise discipline is evident from Matt. 16:19; 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13, and others. And this concerns not only the life, 1 Cor. 5:13, but also the doctrine of the members, Tit. 3:10; Rom. 16:17.

In matters of discipline the Church is not to judge concerning the heart, no more than in the case of admission to the Lord's Supper, but concerning confession and conduct. He whose doctrine is contrary to the Word of God must be disciplined and, if necessary, excommunicated, even though there might be reason for

regarding him as a true believer. If he is such the effect of the excommunication will be beneficial, and he who is one of the children of Abraham must do the works of Abraham, John 8:39. The application of Church discipline, although it does not concern itself with a man's inner state, is a trial of his inner state, tending to make it become evident from his attitude regarding the discipline. If he obstinately continues in his way and dies impenitent, then the Word of God declares that he shall be bound in heaven, Matt. 16:19.

Matt. 16:19, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matt. 18:17, And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as a Gentile and publican.

1 Cor. 5:13, Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.

Tit. 3:10, A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse.

Rom. 16:17, Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them.

293. **Character and Purpose of Church Discipline.**—The purpose of Church discipline is different from that of the civil administration of justice. The civil authority is "a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil," Rom. 13:4, and for this reason its purpose must be to maintain justice through the punishing of evil doers. In the realm of grace, however, there can be no room for a maintenance of justice in that sense, because all the demands of divine justice have been satisfied once for ever by Christ. Still there is also a justice of the Covenant of Grace, but it is of a different nature (Cf. §75), and must be maintained not by punishment but by discipline, not by penalties but by chastisement.

The purpose of Church discipline is threefold:

1) **Maintenance of the honor of Christ.** When a public sin is committed by a member of the Church, the honor of Christ, the Lord, the King, the Savior of the Church is concerned therein. But the honor of Christ is maintained when according to His ordinances the offender is disciplined and either comes to penitence and public confession or is removed from the Church.

2) **Maintenance of the holiness of the Church.** Public sins of Church members seem to give the lie to the truth that the Church is "an holy congregation, of true believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost" (Confession, Art. 27). The holiness of the Church is maintained, however, when it censures the offender and, if he does not repent, removes him from its midst.

3) **Reclaiming the sinner.**—The Lord promises to forgive the sins of him who confesses them, (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9). This confession must be a confession before God, and also, for the sake of the maintenance of the honor of Christ and of the holiness of the Church, a confession before men, especially before those who know of the sin. To come to public confession is therefore a matter of the sinner's own salvation, and brotherly love demands that efforts be made to bring him to confession. When he repents and confesses, Church discipline is satisfied; it has gained its end and is as a rule immediately discontinued. If he does not, he must be excommunicated, but even excommunication is meant to be for him an "extreme remedy."

Secret sins do not endanger the honor of Christ or the holiness of the Church, but the salvation of the sinner is endangered by them as well as by public sins. For that reason there is also discipline in regard to secret sins, Matt. 18:15, 18, which discipline has for its purpose only that of reclaiming and saving the sinning brother.

The civil administration of justice does not ask whether the sin be known to few or to many; nor does it ask if one is penitent or not, and in no instance is it satisfied with penitence, but ecclesiastical discipline asks both, because it has an entirely different purpose and is of an altogether different nature.

> Prov. 28:13, He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whoso confesses and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy.
> 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

294. **Discipline with Respect to Secret Sins.**—By such sins are meant cases where a brother has sinned against us personally, or where we know of a sin done by him in secret and which had not become public. For such cases the rule of Matt. 18: 15-17 is given. Discipline must then be exercised not by the Consistory, but by him against whom the sin is committed or by him who knows of it. These persons may not bring the matter to the attention of the Consistory until they have, although in vain, done all that was possible according to the rule of Matt. 18 to bring the guilty party to acknowledge his sin, and before this has been done the Consistory may not consider the matter.

That which the Lord prescribes to these persons is not to bring the matter to a settlement at any price, but "to show him his fault" with the purpose of making him see his sin and acknowledge it. This must, of course, be done in the spirit of love, but none the less in a way which reveals to him his sin in its real nature, in order that he may come to a confession which is satisfactory. If he makes a confession that is satisfactory to those concerned,

then the matter is therewith finished then and there, even though the sin was a very grievous one, and each of the parties are in duty bound to see to it that the case, which was secret, remains such.

295. **Discipline with Respect to Public Sins.**—By public sins are meant, either sins that were at first secret, but had to be made public according to Matt. 18, because the private admonition was disregarded, or sins that are of their nature of a public character. Such sins must be laid before and acted upon by the Consistory, but not in both cases for the same reasons. Those of the kind first named must be laid before the Consistory for the sake of the offender, because it is necessary for his spiritual good that he repent and confess, Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9, and, as private admonition did not bring that result, the only remaining way to bring him to confession is that of Church discipline, which is in the hands of the Consistory. Sins of the second sort, however, must be laid before the Consistory, not for the sake of the offender only, but also for the sake of the honor of Christ and the holiness of the Church, which are endangered, not by secret sins as long as they remain secret, but by public sins, and therefore require, in order to be maintained, public disciplinary action of the Consistory. To such public sins therefore the rule of Matt. 18 does not apply. The Consistory has to act upon such cases without delay, and without waiting for an accuser to appear.

Prov. 28:13 and 1 John 1:9, see under §293.

296. **The Means of Discipline.**—The Church discipline is exercised at first only through admonition and rebuke; if these fail, "censure" follows, i. e. suspension of one's rights as member of the Church, especially the right to partake of the Lord's Supper; if this fails to have the desired effect, then excommunication follows, whereby the offending person is placed without the Kingdom of heaven, as one who shows through his obstinacy and impenitence that he has no portion in Christ. And whoever is thus "bound on earth" shall, if it be done in accordance with the ordinances of Christ, "be bound in heaven," unless he be converted.

The church-order prescribes that no excommunication shall take place unless three announcements in regard to it shall have been made to the congregation. In the first announcement no name is mentioned, only the sin. In the second also the name must be announced. Since, however, by this second announcement full publicity is given to the case, it is required that previously the Classis be consulted and its approval secured as a precaution that there be no excommunication unless on good grounds. The third announcement is to the effect that, unless within a definite speci-

fied time there be evidences of penitence and conversion, excommunication will follow. Each time the Consistory must be able to tell of the labor bestowed upon the guilty one so that his impenitence may be evident to the entire congregation, and the latter must be urged to pray for him.

These announcements are made for the sake of the guilty person; they are express warnings to him. But they are also made for the sake of the congregation, with a view to its majority rights. Whoever, therefore, has objections is in duty bound to make them known to the Consistory. To fail to do this, and yet to agree with the sinner behind the back of the Consistory, is acting treacherously with regard to the Church, and doing harm to the sinner by strengthening him in his impenitence.

297. **The Congregation and Those Censured.**—Besides the duty of admonishing and praying for those censured, the Scriptures lay upon the Congregation the duty of withdrawing from them, 2 Thess. 3:6; not in so far as it concerns social life, but in so far as it concerns the brotherly association and the communion of the saints, 2 Thess. 3:14b, 15. In this way the Congregation co-operates with the Consistory to save them, for in that way it makes them feel its conviction as to the justice of the discipline imposed upon them and its disapproval of their actions, in order that they may come to humiliation and confession. To do otherwise is to justify the evil doers, and this is an abomination to the Lord, Proverbs 17:15.

> 2 Thess. 3:6, Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which they received from us.
> 2 Thess. 3:14b, 15, That ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

298. **Removal of Members from the Church without Excommunication.**—It happens that members are removed from the Church without preceding censure and formal excommunication, by a decision of the Consistory that their names shall be erased from the roll of Church members. Such action means no more than that the persons concerned are placed outside of the local Church and the denomination, whereas excommunication is the solemn declaration "in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ," that the person concerned is excommunicated from the holy catholic Church, from the fellowship with Christ, as one who must be accounted as a heathen and publican.

Such removal from the Church by way of erasure from the rolls is decidedly wrong in the case of members who have rendered themselves liable to censure. Discipline must be exercised with

respect to them, as obedience to the Lord's ordinances demands it, and as brotherly love, the desire to reclaim them, demands it, since Church discipline was instituted partly to serve as a means to bring about repentance and confession. And if admonishing and censuring be of no avail, then excommunication must result, in order that the honor of Christ and the holiness of the Church be maintained, and as "extreme remedy" for the offenders.

There are, however, cases in which a removal without excommunication seems to be the only thing that can be done. So, for instance, when members of the Church permit themselves to be won over to Baptistic views and still wish to remain members. To tolerate them as members may be possible if they are willing to promise not to disturb congregational life by trying to make propaganda for their views or by refusing to present their children for baptism, but otherwise it is not possible. Then they must necessarily be removed from the Church in order to protect the Congregation against internal strife, and to maintain the unity of faith. But for excommunication there is no Biblical ground; consequently they must be removed without excommunication by a decision of the Consistory that their names shall be erased from the rolls of Church members.

299. **Resignation of membership in order to Escape Discipline.** —Notwithstanding the fact that each member has solemnly promised the Church to subject himself to church discipline, it occurs that a member, seeing himself threatened by censure or already under censure, seeks to escape it by resigning as a member of the church.

To hold that in such cases there is nothing to be done save accepting such resignation is in harmony with the teaching of those who place the Church on the same line as a society organized by men according to their own good pleasure. One can join a society if he is so inclined, and can leave it if he desires; and if he leaves, the society has to let him go unmolested.

But the Church is not a man-made society, but an institution of God. We have become its members not by an act of our own, but through a sovereign act of God, who caused us to be born as its members. Later we associated ourselves with it; that was a voluntary act, but it was one of voluntary obedience; it was an act which we were bound to do. Therefore, we cannot dispose of our membership as we choose. It is a gift of God of which we cannot dispose otherwise than according to His will.

To resign as members with the purpose of going to another denomination may be according to the will of God, if the Church to which we belong has degenerated so that we can no longer remain a member thereof with a good conscience. But it cannot be accord-

ing to His will if we do it to avoid being disciplined. It is possible that one should be unjustly treated by the Consistory; but in such cases one must exercise his right of appeal to the utmost. And if we are held to be in the wrong by the major assemblies, even by the general Synod, then we may think that it is about time that we consider ourselves to be in the wrong and submit ourselves.

Such a resignation being unlawful and sinful, the Consistory can have no right to accept it. By doing so, it does not only act as if the offender has the liberty to do what he does, thus implicitly "justifying the wicked," Prov. 17:15, and aids him in attaining his end to escape discipline, but it has also fellowship with the offender's sin and makes itself personally responsible for that sin. To accept such a resignation is the easiest way for the Consistory to get rid of an undesirable member and a disagreeable case; as a rule it saves itself much trouble thereby; but such considerations may not influence its action. Obedience to the King of the Church and love towards the sinner demand that to such persons, instead of accepting their resignation, the means be applied which the Lord has given to the Church for the correction of the sinning and erring. And if they show themselves to be incorrigible, then excommunication is necessary, in order that the Church be purified from such elements, and that this "extreme remedy" serve for their salvation.

300. **Baptized Members also Objects of Discipline.**—Baptized members are members of the Church and are therefore objects of discipline. But since they do not share in the full rights of mature members of the Church, we cannot speak in their case of a suspension of rights or of formal censure. For them admonitions and rebukes can serve as primary means of censure, and if they fail, excommunication must follow. The awful significance of this excommunication is not felt so deeply as that of the excommunication of confession members. A reason therefor may be that it is done without the solemnity of a liturgical Form, in the same manner therefore as when confessing members are removed from the Church by having their names erased from the rolls of Church members and an announcement to the Congregation. For this reason it is advisable to have this excommunication take place as nearly as possible the same way as the excommunication of confessing members.

301. **Secret Societies.**—With a view to the fact that the evil of secret societies is so universal in our country, our Church has considered itself forced to express itself concerning them. It has declared that membership of secret, oath-bound societies is incom-

patible with membership of the Church of Christ, so that those who belong to such societies and are unwilling to leave them, cannot be admitted or tolerated as members of our Church.

Grounds for this are:

1. That membership in these societies is in conflict with the first commandment, because it is demanded that one shall pledge himself with an oath or solemn promise not to reveal things still unknown, secrets and rules still to be learned, to obey the constitution, laws and resolutions of the order, also still unknown, and to follow the call of the lodge through "due signs" or otherwise. By giving such a promise a person places his conscience, which may be subjected to God alone, unprovisionally in the power of the lodge. He binds himself unconditionally to obey the lodge more than God. This is to set Almighty God aside, to make the lodge his god instead, and this is done with terrible oaths.

2. That it is no less in conflict with the third commandment, because oaths are demanded which are of barbarous character and content and for a sinful purpose. As to the content, for acceptance in a Masonic lodge one must swear: "on no less penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots," etc. (first degree); "on no less a penalty than that of having my breast torn open, and my heart plucked out," etc. (second degree); "on no less penalty than that of having my body severed in twain, my bowels taken from thence," etc. (third degree). Thus God is appealed to in behalf of an action which sets Him aside as the God of the conscience.

That it is in conflict with the third commandment can be said of the entire ritual for initiation, on account of its mock prayers and Scripture readings, joined with all sorts of nonsense and with all manner of foolish acts, to which those who are being initiated have to submit themselves, acts of humiliating character, unworthy of men made in the image of God, and not seldom endangering life.

3. That these societies wish to take the place of the Church instituted by God, and with a religion in which there is nothing offensive to heathen, Jew, or Mohammedan, so that the name of Christ may in no case be mentioned. In the statutes of the Odd Fellows, for instance, we find: "If in this life we faithfully perform our duties as men and as Odd Fellows, be assured, that heaven will cast its rays of light and glory around the impressive lights of our order."

4. That the associations in this society with all manner of worldly people, acknowledged unbelievers and evil doers, to form a brotherhood with them sealed with an oath, is an association in which according to 2 Cor. 6:14-18 a Christian may not take part.

5. That they with their character of secrecy bear the marks

of darkness, John 3:20, 21; and that, by emphatically demanding from one another concealment and protection, even at the expense of justice, they are a dangerous element in the community. Who shall say how many conspirations and miscarriages of justice they have been guilty of in order to reach their ends!

All these things are publicly known. They have been revealed by men who felt themselves in duty bound to break their oaths, because they had learned to see the unrighteousness of the institution and the unlawfulness of these oaths, and who have given us their revelations orally and in written form at the cost of abuse and scorn, in a manner that is above suspicion. In Chicago there is a society of believing men, the National Christian Association, 850 W. Madison St., Station "C," who have devoted themselves to combating the secret societies, and issue a monthly magazine: The Christian Cynosure.

PUBLIC WORSHIP

302. **Meaning.**—The public worship of the congregation is a meeting of God with His people, Ex. 20:24b; Matt. 18:20. The Lord comes to the congregation not only invisibly with a special presence through the Holy Spirit, but also visibly, by means of the office which represents Him and which brings His Word to the congregation in His stead, and also His Sacrament and blessing. And the congregation, receiving and enjoying these benefits, approaches Him as its God, offering to Him its prayer, its song, and its gifts of love.

> Exod. 20:24b, In every place where I record My name I will come unto thee and bless thee.
>
> Matt. 18:20, For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.

303. **Elements.**—The elements of every ordinary public worship are: prayer, preaching, song, almsgiving, and blessing.

1. The prayer is the prayer of the congregation. In it the minister is the mouth of the congregation to God; in his liturgical prayers he does not pray for the fulfilling of his own needs except in so far as these are the needs of the congregation, and when he does this he speaks of himself in the third person. And by virtue of its priestly character the congregation in this prayer comes to the Lord not only with its own needs, but also with "all the needs of Christendom," with the needs of country and people, of the Government and subjects, etc.

2. In the preaching the congregation must not listen to the preacher as to an ordinary speaker, but as to the messenger of God, who does not appear before it in order to permit it to enjoy his gifts, but to bring to it the Word of God, to permit it to hear

what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. The task of the preaching is not only the explanation of the Word, but also the application thereof, thus disclosing that which the Holy Spirit has given in His Word for all times and for all circumstances.

3. The singing is especially the element in which the congregation itself is active, and which for that reason may not be omitted. In song the congregation approaches as a priestess, each member speaking from his own heart in conjunction with the entire congregation, to God with praise and thanksgiving, with humble confession and with fervent prayer. How sad it is therefore if one fails to join in the singing, or merely sings thoughtlessly!

Choir singing, as history proves, has always resulted in reducing the congregation to silence, in order to listen to the beautiful singing; then the song service has lost its true character and has degenerated into a concert.

Our Church is a Psalm singing Church. It confines itself for this part of the service, with a few exceptions, to the Psalms. The reason therefor is not because the use of other songs is to be regarded as something forbidden, but because of practical considerations. If it were forbidden then, for an instance, free prayer must also be forbidden, and—we actually have a few songs. But Calvin declared "after having sought all over, to have found no better songs, more suitable for use in public worship, than the songs of David with which the Holy Spirit had inspired him. If we sing these, then we are only certain that God places the words in our mouths, as if He Himself sang in us, to extol His own glory." And further, as is evident from experience, the introduction of other songs always results in the abandonment of the Psalms, and this loss is too great. It must be admitted, however, that the Church seems to miss the enjoyment of some of the gifts which have been granted it in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, when its song is limited to the Old Testament dispensation, without being able to express itself in the language of the New Testament, and to declare the glory and the virtues of the Lord as these have been revealed in Christ. On the other hand, the fact that it has not pleased the Lord to give among the Apostles or among the Evangelists or Prophets inspired poets to furnish the New Testament Church with New Testament Psalms, seems to indicate the lasting value of the Old Testament Psalms to the end of the world.

4. Almsgiving is no less than any other to be considered as an essential part of public worship. No less than under the Old Testament dispensation, must the service of the Lord under the New Testament be accompanied with gifts of love, 1 Cor. 16:2, and it should be a cause of thankful joy to believers that they can show with material gifts their love and thankfulness to Him, who is All-sufficient, to whom belongs "all the cattle on a thou-

sand hills." Real almsgiving is not so much our giving for the needs of our own local Church, but our giving for the needs of the poor, and of the Kingdom of God in general. The gifts for the poor especially may not be lacking in the service, for then there would be lacking an element of which it is expressly said that it is pleasing to the Lord, 2 Cor. 9:12, Heb. 13:16.

1 Cor. 16:2, Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

2 Cor. 9:12, For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God.

Hebr. 13:16, But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

5. The benediction is pronounced by the minister, just as under the Old Testament dispensation was done by the priest, as ambassador from God in God's stead, Num. 6:27. He only has that right when he appears officially in the assembly of believers which has gathered together to meet with God. Its meaning is more than that of a good wish; it is a divine declaration of His actual granting of that blessing, so that he who receives it believingly, really shares it, as in the case of the blessing of which the Lord spoke in Luke 10:6.

Num. 6:27, So shall they put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.

Luke 10:6, And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall return to you again.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

304. **The Church and Missions.**—With respect to the world without the Church, the latter has the task of bringing the Gospel to all peoples, Matt. 28:19, to Heathen, Jew, and Mohammedan, not forgetting, however, that it must also go out into the by-ways in its own vicinity. Societies have no right to take this work in hand, unless the Church neglects its duty, because it has been expressly given to the Church, Matt. 28:19, and for that reason the Church may not rest until it has fulfilled this mission. The present zeal for missions, which arose in the beginning of the preceding century, is very gratifying, even though here also Satan has tares among the wheat. Since that time it has been ever on the increase; much has been done, yet much remains to be done.

And that for which the Church is responsible, every believer is responsible. It is a personal matter for every one of them whether he heeds the missionary command of our Lord as he should. And the thought of the millions of people who have never heard the Gospel, of the multitude of human beings who daily enter into

eternity without ever having heard the joyful message of salvation, must urge us, if we cannot go ourselves, to further the work through prayer and generous gifts.

305. **The Church and Social Conditions.**—It is certain that the Church must concern itself with social conditions. With respect to the existent widespread injustice and misery, the Church may not conduct itself as did the priest and the Levite, but rather as the Samaritan. We know how much the Lord Himself took to heart the miseries which surrounded Him, and in the Deaconship He has given to the Church a service of mercy. The Church has been accused in modern times of having failed to perform its duty in this respect, and of having thereby estranged the working classes. Such criticism is not always fair, and must often serve to sow enmity against the Church among the common people. But the Church must beware to give no reason to the working classes to think that only Socialism concerns itself with their needs, and that only from Socialism betterment of conditions can be expected. Estrangement of these classes is one of the greatest calamities that can befall to the Church.

But it is another question if the Church can interest itself in social conditions to the satisfaction of the many social reformers of our day. The latter forget that sin is the root of all social misery; they blame everything to conditions, and expect that better conditions will bring forth better men; for them the natural is more than the spiritual, and their idea is that the Church must transform itself from an institution of salvation into an institution of social reform. The Church cannot agree to such principles and cannot satisfy such wishes. It is and must remain the institute of God for the ministration of the Covenant "for the perfection of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ."

The manner in which the Church must concern itself with social conditions is therefore no other than that in which it has concerned itself therewith throughout the ages, has effected these conditions throughout all this time, and has exerted a great influence, viz., through the ministration of the Covenant. But this must be done in such a way that it pays special attention to and makes a special study of the needs of our own age, and in its ministry of the Word expounds and proclaims strongly that which has been laid down by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God especially for our times and needs, and which, if taken to heart, would tend toward making an end to the injustice and misery of the times.

In this way it must labor for better men by laboring for the salvation of sinners and for strengthening the spiritual life in those who believe in order that through its activity men may arise

renewed and recreated by the Holy Spirit, men who love righteousness, who live according to their confession, men of God complete unto every good work, 2 Tim. 3:17.

And in this way also must the Church work for better conditions, by laying its finger upon the sins which especially cause the wounds in our time. With respect to this the Church must, in our opinion, lay special emphasis in its instruction upon the following:

1. Upon our stewardship of the things entrusted to us as a stewardship for which we shall have to render an account. For the fact that this is forgotten is a cause of the greed of capital, of the increasing riches on the one hand and the increasing poverty on the other, of the continued injustice with respect to the workingman when paying him what it must and not what it should, when discharging him when, because of age, he becomes less capable, without concerning itself about his old age. The Church should take care also that it does not act in the same unjust manner with respect to those who serve and have served it.

2. Upon the relation of masters and servants, as this must be according to the Holy Scriptures, cf. Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2; Tit. 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 2:18-21. For this relation is less favorable than it was formerly, and this is no less a canker in the social life. The laborer justly demands of the employer an honest and sympathetic treatment, but forgets that, with respect to this employer, he must show faithfulness and application; and the employer on his side does the same. Each one says of the other: Am I my brother's keeper?

> Col. 3:22-4:1, Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as man-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord: whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto God, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance; ye serve the Lord Christ. For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done; and there is no respect of persons.
>
> Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

3. And further the Church has the duty of combating directly the forces of the revolutionary spirit and of Socialism, which, under the dominant influence of the lie, undermine, as they think in the interest of society, the foundations upon which the Lord has placed the welfare of society, i. e. the duty of everyone to be obedient to the powers placed above him, especially the Government as the minister of God, and further, the sanctity of marriage, and the right of private property. Thus Paul sought to effect social conditions, and he wanted Timothy and Titus to do the same.

3. The Means of Grace

306. **What Is Meant by the Means of Grace.**—In His extrinsic works it pleases God to employ means, in the realm of grace as well as in that of nature. The Lord could keep our natural life in existence immediately, but instead of doing that He does so mediately, by means of food and drink, etc. Therefore food and drink are indispensable to us; we cannot live without them. For our spiritual life also the Lord has ordained means which are indispensable to us. These means we call the means of grace. We are absolutely bound to the use of these means; whoever neglects them withdraws himself from the influence of the Holy Spirit, be it for regeneration and conversion or for growth in grace; and the believer who is unfaithful in the use thereof can expect nothing but retrogression and emaciation as far as his spiritual life is concerned.

307. **Which are the Means of Grace.**—The term "Means of Grace" sounds as if it were meant as a comprehensive term including all the different instrumentalities which are of service to the dispensation and application of grace, such as the Covenant of Grace, the Church, the Church Offices, prayer, striving against sin, special occurrences and experiences, etc., but the term refers to none of these. It is used in the very limited sense of those means of grace: a) which are generally used by the Holy Spirit to work and strengthen faith in our hearts; b) which are essential elements of the Covenant of Grace; c) and of which the ministration is given to the Church, viz. Word and Sacraments.

In regard to these characteristics of the Means of Grace we observe:

1) That both Word and Sacraments are presented in the Scriptures as means which generally are used by the Holy Spirit to work and strengthen faith.

The Word of God, especially the Gospel, is designated as the seed from which the new man originates and grows, Mark 4:8; 26-29, and as the spiritual milk which is without guile, whereby we must grow unto salvation, 1 Pet. 2:2. Other passages of Scripture teaching the same truth are, John 8:31, 32; Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25b.

> John 8:31, 32, Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed in him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
>
> Rom. 10:17, So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
>
> 1 Pet. 1:23, 25b, Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth. . . . . And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you.

The same is true of the Sacraments. Of Baptism Scripture testifies that it makes disciples, Matt. 28:19; that he that believes and is baptized, shall be saved, Mark 16:16; that Baptism which is the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, saves, 1 Pet. 3:21; that to be baptized is to have one's sin washed away, Acts 22:16; that to be baptized is to be buried with Christ in death, to be raised with Him to newness of life, Rom. 6:4; Coll. 2:12. And of the Lord's Supper we are assured that the cup of blessing which we bless, is a communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break a communion of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. 10:16.

In Baptism the water is a sign and seal of Christ's blood, which purifies from all sin, and in the Lord's Supper bread and wine are signs and seals of Christ's body and blood, of that flesh that is meat indeed, and of that blood which is drink indeed, John 6:55. These "holy visible signs and seals are appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the Gospel" (Catechism, Qu. 66).

2) That both Word and Sacraments are essential elements of the Covenant of Grace is also plain. The Word is Law and Gospel, and these are the Law and the Gospel of the Covenant. The Law was given by God as the God of the Covenant of Grace, announcing Himself with the words of grace: I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, Exod. 20:2, and was given to be the rule to the covenant people for a thankful life. And the Gospel is the promise of salvation, which is the heart of the Covenant, its essence, without which it would have been an empty formality (Cf. §237). The entire Word is the Word of the Covenant, the Holy Scripture is the Book of the Covenant, its written "Testament" (Cf. §239). In the same way the Sacraments are "Covenant seals," signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, instituted in order that they might be for us "undoubtable witnesses that we have an eternal Covenant of Grace with God," "in order that we may believe that we belong to this Covenant of Grace," and we may add: instituted also that we may know what we have in this Covenant of Grace.

3. Finally, that both Word and Sacraments are means of grace of which the ministration is entrusted to the Church is evident from the fact that the Apostles were charged by the Lord to preach the Gospel and to administer Baptism, Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15, and that for that purpose the ecclesiastical offices have been instituted, Eph. 4:11, 12.

> Eph. 4:11, 12, And he gave to some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.

Word and Sacraments are, however, not to be placed upon the same plane as means of grace. The Word takes the first place, the Sacraments the second. In a certain sense it can be said that the Sacraments are the Word itself, i. e. the Word figuratively expressed, revealed in tangible form, so that the Sacrament brings the same message of grace to the eye that the Word brings to the ear. But this does not take away the fact that the Sacraments are signs and seals of the Word, that they are therefore destined to serve the Word, and that without the Word they are but empty forms, whereas the Word loses none of its significance without the Sacraments. Furthermore the Word serves not only to strengthen the faith, but also to work it, whereas the Sacraments serve only to strengthen it. Finally, the Word must be ministered everywhere; by means of the Gospel peace must be preached as well to those that are afar off as to those who are nigh, Eph. 2:17, but the Sacraments are only for those who belong to the Covenant, for the believers and their seed.

308. **The Means of Grace and Faith.**—The significance of the means of grace for spiritual life lies especially in the significance which they have for faith. This is what we confess in Qu. 65 of the Catechism. There is it said that the Holy Spirit uses these Means of Grace; that He uses them in regard to faith; that He uses them to work faith through the Word, and to confirm it through (the Word and) the Sacraments.

For faith has been rightly called "the radical grace." In the parable of the true vine the Lord has taught us that the entire welfare of our spiritual life depends upon our "abiding in Him." "Without Me ye can do nothing," He said, but "he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." This "abiding in Him" is a matter of faith. It is through faith that we cleave to Him, that we trustingly rely on Him, that we hopefully expect from Him all grace, and, as that is the way to be intimately united to Him, we shall the more receive from Him, as a branch from the vine, the grace of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in Him, to grow, to blossom forth, and to bear fruit.

309. **The Working of Faith through the Word.**—The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts, says the Catechism, through the preaching of the Gospel (Qu. 21, 65). In connection with the distinction that is to be made between the faculty of faith, by which we are enabled to believe, and the act of faith or the actual believing (Cf. §419), the question is here, is it the faculty or the act of faith that is meant, or both? Our answer is: both.

The working of the faculty of faith belongs to regeneration, and as regeneration is worked by the Holy Spirit through the Word (Cf.§384), so also the faculty of faith. This, however, is all we can

say of it, for how the Holy Spirit in His unsearchable work of regeneration, John 3:8, the work of the implanting of new life, uses the Word, "the Word of good tidings, which was preached unto you," 1 Pet. 1:25, we cannot explain.

The faith that the Catechism has in view in Qu. 65 is the act of faith. This is evident from the immediately preceding questions (20 and 64), which speak of faith as that through which we are ingrafted in Christ and become partakers of all His benefits (Qu. 20), through which we are implanted in Christ and become fruitful branches of the True Vine (Qu. 64). Now the faith that saves, the faith that is demanded to be saved, is in Scripture always the act of faith. The demand is not, Have faith in Christ, or Have the faculty to believe in Christ, but, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 16:31, enter in by the narrow gate, Matt. 7:13, enter in by the door, John 10:9, take my yoke upon you, Matt. 11:29, eat of the bread of life, John 6:50, 51, come and take the water of life freely, Rev. 22:17, etc., etc.

That the act of faith is impossible without knowledge of Christ and of the Gospel, is self-evident, for it is Christ who is the object of faith, and therefore, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" Rom. 10:14. This does not mean, however, that the activity of the Holy Spirit in working faith through the Gospel consists only in having the Gospel preached, for preaching of the Gospel alone, though indispensable, is not sufficient to cause faith. What is needed is also an activity on the part of the Holy Spirit by which our intellect is enlightened to understand the Gospel as a well-meant offer of salvation to us personally and by which our will is moved to accept it. An illustration of this we have in the case of Lydia, of whom it is said that while Paul preached the Lord opened her heart to give heed unto the things which were spoken, Acts 16:14.

310. **Strengthening of Faith through Word and Sacraments.**— For believing acceptance of the promise of the Gospel it is above all necessary to have a clear understanding of its contents and meaning, and to be convinced that it concerns us personally. Many are the causes that darken our spiritual eyes for both these things. Besides our natural evil-mindedness and distrust towards God and our being influenced by the lie, there are all kinds of false conceptions concerning the promise, of which those are the most disturbing that are ultraorthodox in origin and nature. Furthermore the activities of Satan are especially directed against faith as against a point of strategic importance. And even a deep conviction of one's own sinfulness and unworthiness can make it all the more difficult to realize that the grace of God is so wonderfully great. As long as such influences succeed in hiding from our view

the real nature of the Gospel, the natural consequence is that a confident acceptance of the free offer of salvation is hindered and retarded. But when our spiritual eyes are opened to the fact that by the wonderful grace of God in the promise the right is given us to come and to take the water of life freely, then we will take courage to fight and conquer doubts and hindrances and, relying on the promise, to appropriate Christ as our Savior and to surrender ourselves to Him unconditionally to be His own.

The way to strengthen faith is therefore, as the Catechism so truthfully says, that of the more fully declaring and sealing to us the promise of the Gospel (Qu. 66), declaring it to us that we may more fully and clearly understand it, and sealing it to us that we may be convinced that it concerns us personally. This is it what the Holy Spirit does; and He does it through the Word and the Sacraments.

In the first place through the Word. He, the prime Author of that Word, has adapted it for that purpose. Accordingly we find in the Scriptures: a) the promise of salvation, not given only once, but repeated over and over again, incessantly, always in new forms of expression and in new, inviting modes of presentation; it is presented to the thirsty as a free offer of wine and milk, to the hungry as a free offer of the bread of life, to the weary and heavy laden as a free offer of rest, to those who are without as an open door by which they may enter, to the poor and needy on the highways and hedges as an invitation to a marriage feast, to a kingly repast, etc., etc.; b) the promise portrayed in a number of types and typical incidents, such as the ark of Noah, the passage of the Red Sea, the manna, the water from the rock, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, Canaan given to Abraham's seed as a possession which was to be inherited through faith; c) the promise raised to a Covenant, a Covenant confirmed by an oath and sealed by the Sacraments, "that in two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement;" and this Covenant tirelessly referred to as calling for faith and obedience, and guaranteeing salvation to those that walk in its ways. Consequently the preaching of the Word must of necessity tend to throw more and more light on the promise of the Gospel, and it will do so in the measure that it is real preaching of the Word. And so the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word "the more fully declares the promise of the Gospel," and thereby strengthens faith.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit strengthens faith through the use of the Sacraments. These, too, answer that purpose. As signs they present to us in a very simple and striking way the promise of the Gospel in a visible form, in the manner of object teaching, in order to make us the more clearly understand and realize the fullness

of its meaning. And as seals they assure us, not only of the truth and reliability of the promise, but also, being administered to us personally, of our personal participation in the promise. For as seals of the Covenant they are given us as "undoubtable witnesses" of that fact, "in order that we may firmly believe that we belong to this Covenant of Grace." Thus "by the use of the Sacraments the more fully declaring and sealing to us the promise of the Gospel," the Holy Spirit strengthens faith.

A. THE WORD AS MEANS OF GRACE

311. **Significance of the Word as Means of Grace.**—The Westminster Catechism describes the significance of the Word as means of grace in the following manner: The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to His image, and subduing them to His will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation, (Qu. 155).

To these ends the Word of God is both Law and Gospel, each of which has to serve to these ends according to its own nature.

THE LAW AS A MEANS OF GRACE

312. **Destination of the Law as Means of Grace.**—In the state of integrity the Law had a twofold purpose (Cf. §142), and the same is true of the Law as a means of grace. As such it has to serve:

a) to the sinner as a revealer of his misery, of his lost condition by nature, in order that he may come to seek salvation through Christ, Rom. 3:20, Gal. 3:24.

b) to the believers as a rule for a life of thankfulness. It is true that also for them the Law must serve "that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ," and that therefore also to them the Law is to be "strictly" preached (Catechism, Qu. 115). But more especially it must serve them to show how to walk "well-pleasing to God, with reverence and awe," Hebr. 12:28.

Here we are concerned only with the Law in the former sense, as "a tutor to bring the sinner unto Christ." In the latter sense it is to be treated in the chapter on Sanctification (§§468-478).

Rom. 3:20, For through the law cometh the knowledge of sin.
Gal. 3:24, So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

313. **How the Law reveals to us our Misery.**—Knowledge of our misery is to be obtained through the Law by:

a) learning to understand its demands, both concerning our inner being and our external conduct, realizing that this Law is not merely a piece of good advice, but the expression of the absolute will of God, as it threatens the transgressor with a terrible curse, Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10b.

> Gal. 3:10b, For it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.

b) comparing ourselves with these demands. The Law presents to us as in a mirror the image of the perfect man, and thus enables us by making a comparison between that image and ourselves, to become aware of our condition.

Thus the Law will show us that we are directly in conflict with the will of God, hating where He demands love, transgressing where He demands obedience, and that therefore, as objects of its curse, we are lost.

314. **Preaching of the Law Necessary.**—If therefore preaching shall serve as a means for the conversion of sinners, then the preaching of the Law with the sternness of its demands and the fearfulness of its curse may not be lacking. No preaching of the Law without preaching of the Gospel, but also no preaching of the Gospel without preaching of the Law. The preaching of the Law has been misused by an ultraorthodoxy that considered the Gospel as intended for the elect only, and had no other message for the sinner than "the thunders of Sinai." Such preaching hardens more than it humiliates. But the idea fostered by so many in our day, that the words "hell," "damnation" must not longer be heard from a cultured pulpit, reminds one of the "rebellious people, lying children, that will not hear the Law of Jehovah," who said "speak unto us smooth things," Is. 30:9, 10.

315. **The Measure of Self-Knowledge that is Necessary.**—The measure of self-knowledge that is necessary in order that in this respect the Law may reach its end and really be "our tutor to bring us unto Christ," Gal. 3:24, is determined by its result, viz. that it actually bring us unto Christ. Let no one think that, before taking refuge with Christ, he must await a deeper knowledge of himself and deeper mortification; the less so because as a rule such thoughts are due to self-righteous leanings.

The measure in which one feels his misery through he Law varies. Besides, one can feel his curse deeply and yet not go to God for mercy. Cain, Gen. 4:13, and Judas, Matt. 27:4, deeply felt their misery, but the deep consciousness of their guilt, instead of driving them to God, drove Cain from God to the land of Nod,

and Judas from God to suicide. Depth of consciousness of misery, therefore, is no guarantee for genuineness. If we see our misery and are anxious and grieved concerning it, we are not yet freed from it. Consequently it is not the question how deep this self-knowledge is, but if it really makes us flee to Him, with whom there is forgiveness, that He may be feared, Ps. 130:4.

THE GOSPEL AS A MEANS OF GRACE

316. **What the Gospel is.**—The Gospel contains three essential parts. It is a well meant offer of grace, of full salvation in Christ, to all to whom it comes, with a demand of faith, a demand to believe this offer, and with the assurance that whoever believes it shall not perish but have everlasting life.

That the Gospel is a well meant offer of grace, an offer of full deliverance in Christ, freely, to all to whom it is proclaimed, is clearly taught in Scripture in a most striking manner, intended to impress this glorious fact upon our hearts and to leave no room for doubt. To prove this we wish to call attention to the following texts:

Is. 45:22, Look unto Me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.

Is. 55:1, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Jer. 3:14, Return, O backsliding children, saith Jehovah; for I am a husband unto you, and I will take you.

Jer. 8:22, Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered.

Ezek. 33:11, Say unto them, As I live, saith Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Matt. 11:28, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Luke 14:17, 23, And he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And the Lord said unto the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Mark 16:15, And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.

2 Cor. 5:20, We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.

Eph. 2:17, And he came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh.

Rev. 22:17, And he that is athirst, let him come; he that will, let him take of the water of life freely.

How beautiful these texts are, all full of Gospel language, all to the praise and glory of the infinite grace of God! What is the

invitation of Is. 45:22 but a well meant offer of salvation, and that to all the ends of the earth! What a striking fact it is that in the parable of the great supper the dispensation of grace is presented as a bounteous repast, to which the guests are invited! For to be invited to a feast means that the right is given to come and to take freely from what the host has prepared as much as one desires. That right was given to all that were to be found in the highways and hedges! It is from this same point of view that the Lord Himself asked the questions: Why then is the health of the daughter of my people not recovered? and: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? questions for which otherwise there would have been no ground. And then that the Lord Jehovah even condescends to use the oath, and to swear that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, with the purpose of making an end to the gainsayings of unbelief; and that we are assured that those who proclaim the Gospel are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, who have to beseech sinners on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God, as though God were entreating by them—who then are we that we should still dare to doubt, that we should still dare to deny the truth of such statements!

As we said, there are two other essential parts to the Gospel, a demand of faith and the assurance that those who believe will be saved. These two parts follow naturally from the first. The demand of faith follows from it, because as an offer of salvation to all to whom the Gospel is made known, it is obvious that they all must believe it, or otherwise make God a liar. The offer of salvation by God cannot but enjoin the duty of accepting it believingly and thankfully. Those that do not do so are called "disobedient," John 3:36. And the certainty that those who believe are saved follows from the first part also, because as a well meant offer it must be impossible for any one who believes and accepts it to perish. In most of the texts named all three parts are to be found.

317. **The Gospel and the External Call.**—Gospel and external call are very closely related to one another. As an invitation to partake of the salvation in Christ, the Gospel itself is a call to that salvation. When the Gospel is preached to a person, he is externally called, and we can also say that the Gospel is the content of the external call. What is true of the Gospel is therefore also true of the external call, viz. that this call is a well meant invitation to come to Christ and be saved by Him, with the demand that this call, as a call on behalf of Christ, shall be believed and obeyed, and with the assurance that all those who believe and obey it shall be saved.

318. **The Canons of Dort on this Subject.**—Not infrequently

the preaching of the Gospel as a general well meant offer of grace and salvation is decried as the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement. The Fathers of Dordrecht, however, were certainly no advocates for this doctrine, and they expressed themselves in the Dordrecht Canons against the Arminians as follows:

> As many as are called by the Gospel, are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly, and truly declared in His Word, what will be acceptable to Him; namely, that all who are called, should comply with the invitation. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest, to as many as shall come to him, and believe on him.
>
> It is not the fault of the Gospel, nor of Christ, offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the Gospel, and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word, refuse to come, and be converted; the fault lies in themselves, etc. III, & IV, 8, 9).

Such a conception of the Gospel and the external call, both as well meant to all, is, as is plain from this quotation, an integral part of our Confession, of Reformed doctrine as maintained at Dordrecht against the Arminians with their doctrine of universal atonement.

319. **This is no Universal Atonement.**—What is meant by the doctrine of universal atonement has been described in §211. The difference between this doctrine and that of a general well meant offer of grace lies in this, that the first concerns the question for whom the satisfaction of Christ is intended in God's decree to bring deliverance. This is a question which concerns the secret things. The second, however, concerns the question: To whom is salvation in Christ offered? and this is a question which concerns the revealed things. In Arminianism we have an effort to bring the secret and the revealed things into agreement. This is done by distorting the secret things in such a manner as the revealed things seem to demand it. This may not be done. To do the same in the other direction by holding that only to the elect well meant grace is offered, is no less a distortion of the truth.

320. **Denial of the Fact that the Gospel is Well-meaning to All.**—The Synod of Dordrecht has not permitted itself in its struggle against the Arminians to be led astray, to go to the other extreme, but this was soon done, however. It was thought that the doctrine of election would not permit of such a conception of the Gospel, and thus it was proposed that the Gospel was well meant only for the elect, or, which amounts to the same thing, that grace is offered, according to some to those only who were truly broken hearted and of a contrite spirit, or according to others only on condition of faith and repentance. The meaning of these differ-

ent presentations was the same: only to the elect or to those that had the marks of being of the elect.

To say that the Gospel is an offer of salvation on condition of faith and repentance sounds quite right and in accordance with Scripture, but in reality it is decidedly wrong, contrary to Scripture, and confusing. Scripture indeed requires faith and repentance, but as conditions to be made partakers of salvation, not as conditions for the offer of salvation. It is not so that salvation is only offered to those that believe and repent, but so that salvation is only inherited by those that believe and repent, John 3:36; Mark 16:16. The offer is free, unconditional, Is. 55:1; Rev. 22:17. It is, therefore, nothing less than distortion of Scripture truth, when faith and repentance are made conditions of the Gospel offer.

Considered closely, the expression that by the Gospel salvation is offered on condition of faith and repentance even appears to be self-contradictory, perplexing, nonsensical. If salvation is offered on condition of faith, it means that one must believe before salvation is offered to him. Believe what? Believe the Gospel, of course, believe that salvation is offered to him. He must believe that before it is actually true. He must believe that it is true while at that moment it is not yet true. This is impossible. It is nonsense. The truth is that salvation is offered freely, not on any condition but "merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits" (Catechism, Qu. 21), and that faith, belief in this promise or offer, must follow as absolutely necessary to come to a believing acceptance and appropriation. The right order is therefore first the offer and then faith, not first faith and then the offer.

321. **Source of this Error.**—This wrong conception of the Gospel and the external call was a result of a rationalistic tendency of Scholasticism similar to that which revealed itself in Arminianism. If one is of the opinion that divine truth must in all respects harmonize with human logic, then it is not surprising that he concludes from the doctrine of predestination that God only offers grace to those whom He has elected to salvation, and not to those whom He has rejected, since otherwise God's dealing in the Gospel would be in conflict with His decrees.

That there is a difficulty here, is not to be denied. But this difficulty does not exist in this case alone. To our darkened reason the revealed and the secret things are again and again in conflict. We have already met with instances of this more than once, and some of them may be recalled here. Concerning the crucifixion of Christ it is stated in Acts 2:23 that the Jews acted at the same time in conflict with and in agreement with

God's will, in conflict with His revealed and in agreement with His secret will. The same is true of every sin committed. No sinful act is committed, but it is decreed, willed by God in the will of His decree, and yet not willed according to the will of His command. The manner in which the Lord speaks to Cain in Gen. 4:7 and to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:38 is, as far as we can see, in conflict with what He had decreed concerning them in His counsel, namely, that Cain was to murder his brother, and that Jeroboam was to make Israel to sin. To both men promises were made which sound as if such decrees concerning them did not exist.

Such things we cannot explain to our satisfaction, but they teach us that we have no right to think that in such instances we may judge according to our logic. We are expressly warned against this in Deut. 29:29. Both parts, that it has been determined from eternity by God who should be saved and who should not, and that the Gospel is a well-meant offer of grace and salvation, are taught by the Scriptures most clearly and positively. Both must therefore be accepted. And if God could act as He did in the concrete instances of Cain and Jeroboam, why cannot He also act thus in the Gospel with those who are rejected!

If we do not wish to accept both, we are guilty of a rationalism which either rejects predestination as do the Arminians, or rejects the fact that the offer of grace is well-meant and general as does ultraorthodoxy. The error may lead both parties in opposite directions, but it essentially is the same error; in both instances it is Rationalism, which places its own judgment above the Scriptures (Cf. §96).

322. **Results of such Rationalistic Reasoning.**—The pernicious results of this rationalistic reasoning are: a) That many attach little value to the external call as an invitation of God to the deliverance which is in Christ; — b) That many have very little conception of the necessity of appropriating this grace, John 1:12. That the righteousness of Christ must become ours not only through granting from God's side but also through acceptance on our side, is something that is strange to them. They imagine that in being saved we are wholly passive, that grace is received without any conscious responsive activity on our part, and therefore "marks of grace" are desired to determine from them if they have received it; — c) That many have such vague conceptions of faith. When it is brought to their attention from the Word of God that in order to be saved they must believe, it does not affect them, for they do not understand it. Faith, they think, is something that is to come later, when they become convinced

that they are saved. They must first know if they are elected, for with those only does the Lord concern Himself, those only will He receive; — d) That many lack the assurance of faith, because they know of no certainty of being saved than such a one which rests on subjective grounds, and everything that is subjective is uncertain. As far as they may have a hope, it is, as they themselves are wont to express it, a hope "of times and moments."

323. **The Universality of the Gospel for the Benefit of the Elect.** —That the Gospel is a universal well-meant offer of grace and salvation, that its glad tidings of remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits, concern not the elect only, but all to whom this message comes, is a fact which in the end is to the benefit of the elect only.

The careless sinner derives no profit from it. As long as he continues to be a careless sinner, it is for him no glad tidings that in the Gospel he receives a personal well-meant invitation to come to the marriage feast, that in the Gospel salvation full and free is offered to him. And not only this, but it will tend to make the day of judgment the more intolerable for him, Luk. 14:21; Prov. 1:24-26, and to make him the more an object of God's wrath, Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 12:47. This is conclusive proof for the fact, that the Gospel most decidedly concerns him. Otherwise it could not be held against him as a sin deserving of many stripes, of greater damnation, that he had not believed the Gospel, as in that case it was not for him to believe it, because it was not meant for him. There can be no obligation for a person to believe a message as being meant for him, when it is not meant for him.

> Matt. 11:20-24, Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you, etc.
>
> Luke 12:47, And that servant, who knew His Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.
>
> Luke 14:21, And the servant came and told the Lord these things. Then the master of the house being very angry said to his servant, etc.
>
> Prov. 1:24-26, Because I have called and ye have refused; I have stretched forth my hand and no man hath regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I will also laugh in the day of your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.

But the elect, those who learn to flee from the wrath to come and to seek salvation in Christ, are the ones who profit by the

universality of the Gospel. For them it is a most happy moment when they come to realize that the external Gospel call is a universal call, and therefore a call, an invitation, an offer, "not only to others, but to them also," to them personally; a call which gives them the gracious right to come and to take the water of life freely; a call which assures them that after having come and having taken that water, they shall not perish but have everlasting life, because that water, thus being appropriated by them, must now be theirs for ever, and because it is that living water, that in them shall become a well of water springing up unto eternal life. Thus they learn to believe the Gospel in such a way that they actually accept Christ as their Savior, without feeling any need to look in the book of God's decrees first. And such a faith will come to an ever more firmly rooted assurance of faith, since it does not rest on subjective, ever fluctuating feelings and emotions, but on the objective, unchangeable Word of God, and because after having thus believed they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. 1:13, which beareth witness with their spirit that they are children of God, Rom. 8:16.

B. THE SACRAMENTS

324. **Significance of the Sacraments.**—Sacraments are holy visible signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, appointed by God for this end, that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the Gospel (Catechism, Qu. 66).

The word "sacrament" does not occur in the Scriptures. It was used by the Romans to indicate the act through which a thing was transferred to the sacred sphere of the gods, especially for the military oath with which soldiers bound themselves to the Emperor, who was honored as a god. Early in history the Christians gave this name to the signs of the Covenant.

325. **Characteristics of a Sacrament.**—The characteristics of a Sacrament are: 1) as to origin, that it be instituted as sacrament by God; — 2) as to character, that there be: a visible, figurative act, and a grace typified and sealed thereby. Without these things a rite cannot be a sacrament.

Emphasis has always been laid upon these demands of a sacrament over against the Roman Church, since this Church teaches that there are seven sacraments, i. e. the following besides Baptism and Lord's Supper (Communion):

1. Confirmation (for people to be admitted to Communion).
2. Confession (of sins to a priest).
3. Marriage.
4. Ordination (of priests).
5. Extreme Unction (of dying persons).

These five so-called sacraments were immediately rejected by the Reformers, because the first (confirmation) and the last (extreme unction) lacked the divine institution, the third (marriage) and the fourth (ordination) lacked a visible figurative act, whereas the second (confession) lacked both.

326. **Signs and Seals.**—That the Sacraments are signs and seals is evident from Rom. 4:11 where it is said that Abraham had received the sign of the circumcision as a seal to the righteousness of faith.

As signs the Sacraments are destined to elucidate the promise of the Covenant or of the Gospel, to present it in visible form, in order that it may be more fully understood (Catechism, Qu. 66).

As seals they are destined: a) to make the promise known as genuine, as a seal upon a document; to testify to us that the typified grace is as certain, says the Catechism in Qu. 75, "as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and the cup of the Lord." And, b) to assure us that the promise concerns us. The Lord said with respect to circumcision: My covenant shall be in your flesh, Gen. 17:13. In our Confessional Standards the Sacraments are called "pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us" (Confession, Art. 33), in which we "bear the ensign and banner of Christ" (Art. 34). Baptism is designated as "a seal and undoubted (undoubtable) testimony, that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God" (Baptismal Form), and the Lord's Supper as instituted "that we may firmly believe that we belong to this covenant of grace" (Communion Form).

As signs they serve to declare the promise; as seals they seal the promise and also the partaker: the promise as genuine, the partakers as a Covenant member to whom the promise comes.

327. **Working of the Sacraments.**—The Roman Church teaches that the Sacraments work grace merely through the use thereof, in virtue of efficacious grace inherent in the sacramental elements (water and bread and wine). Baptism as such really wipes away sin, and so completely purifies the soul, that one who dies immediately after being baptized, goes directly to heaven, having no need of any purification in purgatory. And Communion gives spiritual nourishment simply through eating the bread (the consecrated wafer), because that wafer is the real body of Christ, and the wine, which only the priest may drink, is the real blood of Christ.

The Reformed Churches, on the contrary, confess in their Standards that the Sacraments work in a rational manner, conformably

to reason. In the description of the Sacraments in general, given in the Catechism, Qu. 66, it is said that they are instituted by God "to the end that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare (explain, make clear to our understanding) and seal to us the promise of the Gospel." According to this description they are destined to work upon our understanding, and through our understanding upon our faith, so that they cannot gain that end where there is no understanding. Baptism can, as far as the baptized one is concerned, not gain that end before the child is coming to years of discretion, and to the Lord's Supper no young children are admitted.

In regard to the working of the Sacraments we may speak of a course along which this working proceeds:

a) They declare and seal the promise. They declare the promise by giving of it a visible presentation, in the manner of object-teaching, this visible presentation signifying the washing away of our sins and the being fed and nourished to everlasting life with the crucified body and shed blood of Christ, as included in the promise. They seal the promise as certifying tokens that the promise is as undoubtably true and trustworthy as we see its visible presenation administered before our eyes. And they seal the partaker by being administered to him personally, thereby giving him the mark of the heirs to the promise, "a sure remembrance and pledge to be admonished and assured of the hearty love and faithfulness of the Triune God toward him."

b) By thus declaring and sealing the promise, thereby giving us evidence of the truth of the promise and of the certainty of our having part in it, they strengthen our faith in the promise and in the fact that it is to us personally.

c) By strengthening our faith they prompt and encourage our faith to accept and appropriate that which is offered freely in the promise—Christ and all the fullness of His grace. In this way our assurance of faith (Cf. §430) gains new strength, as the Sacraments "admonish and assure" him who uses them believingly that he is "a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits" (Catechism, Qu. 75).

All this is working, not of the Sacraments alone, but of the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments, which bears a rational character, working in which our understanding is engaged, and through the understanding faith is affected.

In connection with the Lord's Supper it is said that through this Sacrament "believers are fed and nourished with the body and blood of Christ as certainly as they eat of this broken bread, and drink of the cup" (Catechism, Qu. 77). Here again faith appears as "the radical grace." Strengthening of faith is strength-

ening of the whole new man, for the stronger the faith, the closer the unity with Christ, the True Vine. This being fed and nourished is the upbuilding effect of the strengthening of faith upon the whole new man. This, however, is not accomplished in a rational manner, but through the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit.

328. **The Sacraments and the Assurance of Faith.**—The significance of the Sacraments for the assurance of faith is much misunderstood. Many have the idea especially in regard to the Lord's Supper, that to assure the partakers of salvation is about all that a Sacrament is destined to do, that this assurance is given indiscriminately to every one of them, although to the hypocrite for a judgment, and that it is given simply by the use of the Sacrament, even as the Catholics think that the Sacraments impart their spiritual blessings simply by their use. For that reason they do not feel free to celebrate the Lord's supper when they are in doubts on this point, and for that reason also is this institution of the love of Christ for them more an object of fear than of appreciation.

But the Sacraments do not give that assurance in such an external manner. If they did, that assurance would be worthless, since then it could not be relied upon. There is no way of preventing hypocrites to partake of the Lord's Supper, since we cannot judge of the heart. If the Sacraments gave that assurance in a mechanical way, the hypocrite would receive it as well as the believer. Such a Sacrament could not be trusted, even though but one communicant in a thousand were a hypocrite.

The assurance which is given by the Sacrament directly is an assurance concerning the promise, and this assurance is always true, even in regard to the hypocrite. But the assurance that we shall not perish, but have everlasting life, is not given by the Sacraments directly, but is to be derived from them through faith, through believing acceptance of their assurance concerning the promise, so that the assurance concerning our salvation can be gained only by them that are entitled to it, viz. the believers. Having been assured by the Sacraments of the reliability of the promise, and of the certainty that we share in it, faith concludes that the salvation freely given by God in the promise, and accepted by us, is ours for ever. For "whenever we receive the promise of the Gospel by a true faith, all our sins are really forgiven us by God, for the sake of Christ's merits" (Catechism, Qu. 84). In this conclusion of faith the Holy Spirit will "bear witness with our Spirit, that we are children of God."

The hypocrite, on the contrary, receives likewise the assurance that the promise is reliable and that it concerns him personally,

but on account of his lack of faith he cannot appropriate the promise, nor conclude that he is saved. As sign and seal of the promise the Sacrament bears witness against him, and he "eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself."

329. **Two Sacraments.**—Under the Old Testament dispensation there were but two Sacraments: Circumcision and Passover, which both caused shedding of blood, and thus bore an Old Testament typical character. The meaning of Circumcision was to be a sign, Gen. 17:13, and seal, Rom. 4:11, of the Covenant of Grace. In Circumcision the Israelite was to have God's Covenant "in his flesh," to be to him, as the Baptismal Form expresses it, "an undoubtable witness that he had an eternal Covenant with God." The Passover was instituted at the time of the departure from Egypt, not to be a national celebration in commemoration of a historical event only, for, although it was that, it was no less fully a Sacrament. Even as a celebration of the deliverance out of the house of bondage it had a typical meaning, since that deliverance was a type of the deliverance of the covenant people out of the bondage of sin. Especially, however, does it appear as a Sacrament in the lamb of the Passover, which was a sign and seal of Christ as well as bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

> Rom. 4:11, And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal to the righteousness of faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision.
>
> 1 Cor. 5:7b, For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ.
>
> Rev. 5:12, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

Likewise under the New Testament dispensation there are but two Sacraments: Baptism which was instituted in place of circumcision, and the Lord's Supper, which was instituted in place of the Passover. These Sacraments are not accompanied by shedding of blood, because after the true shedding of blood upon Golgotha, there was no longer a place for typical bloodshedding.

HOLY BAPTISM

330. **The Doctrine of Baptism as Presented in the Baptismal Form.**—According to the Baptismal Form the doctrine of Baptism is contained in three parts and these parts are: a) that which Baptism points out to us, viz. our misery; b) that which Baptism witnesses and seals to us, viz. deliverance from that misery; c) that which Baptism admonishes and obliges us to, viz. thankfulness.

In the first place Baptism points to our misery through its form,

as a being washed with water, for the necessity to be washed indicates impurity. Thus through Baptism "the impurity of our souls is signified," and this is done that we be "admonished to loathe and humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation without ourselves."

Secondly, "Holy Baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ," and this also through its form as a being washed with water, and that in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Form gives us a beautiful explanation of this being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, an explanation which is also the explanation of the promise of the Covenant: To be a God unto thee. For to be baptized in the name of the Triune God signifies that the Triune God binds himself to be a God unto us; the Father to be our Father, the Son to be our Saviour, and the Holy Ghost to be our Sanctifier. The words of the Form are as follows:

> "For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit.
>
> "And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God.
>
> "In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this Holy Sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members in Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

That the Form can truly speak in this manner follows from the Covenant promise itself as well as from the significance of being baptized into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. For this "into the Name" does not mean "upon the command of," but: "to be placed in relation to" to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; to the Father as our Father, to the Son as our Saviour, to the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier.

Finally we are "through Baptism admonished of, and obliged unto a new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life."

It is worthy of note how correctly the Form, in agreement with the one-sided character of the Covenant, lays emphasis upon the duty, not as something to which the person baptized binds himself,

but as something to which Baptism binds him. It is true that the one baptized by permitting himself to be baptized binds himself to it, just as by letting himself be circumcised one bound himself to keep the Law, Gal. 5:3. For to accept the signs and seals of the Covenant is to accept the Covenant itself, with its obligations as well as its promises. But the point here is, what Baptism does as seal of the Covenant, and for that reason it is pointed out that Baptism does the same as the Covenant does. Just as in the Covenant the Triune God binds Himself to the covenant member to be a God unto him, and binds the covenant member to Himself to serve Him, so it is in the case of Baptism. Such, for that matter, is the case in the whole of this presentation of the doctrine of Baptism. What is said to be the doctrine of Baptism is in reality the doctrine of the Covenant with its three parts of misery, deliverance, and thankfulness. It is the doctrine of the Covenant declared and sealed by Baptism.

331. **The Prayer of Thanks of the Form.**—Entirely in agreement with what holy Baptism is said to signify and seal, is the Thanksgiving of the Form, in which the following remarkable words are laid upon the lips of the congregation:

> "We thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same to us by holy Baptism."

Here the sealed benefits are included in these two: forgiving of all our sins and being taken to be members in Christ, and that as benefits which have become fact, benefits which belong to their children as well as to the believers. This is not asserted too much. For, as we have seen, their being received (accepted) as members of Christ is signified and sealed by Baptism as an ordinance by which they are baptized into (ingrafted into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Sprit. And also as seal of being made members in God's Covenant and His Church, Baptism must be a seal of being made members of Christ, for the Church is the body of Christ.

332. **To whom these Benefits are Sealed by Baptism.**—Those who identify the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Redemption (Cf. §254ff.) teach that Baptism seals these benefits to the elect only. This, however, is not the doctrine of the Baptismal Form. This Form teaches plainly that the sealing is to be considered as concerning all the adults and all the children of believers who are baptized, without distinction. The expressions it uses with respect to this point admit of no other interpretation. To prove this we may refer to the following particulars:

a) That throughout, even in its thanksgiving prayer, it speaks of "us and our children" in general, without any indication that this is not meant in so general a sense.

b) That after every administration of Baptism, and with respect to everyone who was baptized it prescribes the prayer:

> "We beseech Thee—that Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus in every instance for "these baptized children," consequently for each baptized child, the prayer is offered, that it may "increase and grow in the Lord Jesus Christ," which implies that each baptized child is regarded as ingrafted in Christ, for only those that are branches of the True Vine can increase and grow in Him.

c) That the Form presents Baptism as an "undoubted (undoubtable) witness that we have an eternal Covenant of Grace with God." This is said with a view to cases of "through weakness falling into sin" and being in danger of "despairing of God's mercy." Then, the Form tells us, when all support for our faith threatens to fall away, the support of Baptism still remains as that of an "undoubtable witness." The Form can only speak thus by acknowledging that Baptism has an objective significance for every one who received that Sacrament. For Baptism could impossibly be such an undoubtable witness to the one fallen into sin, if it were truly a Baptism only to the elect and regenerated, and sealed the benefits of the promise to them only. The one fallen into sin, who begins to doubt God's mercy surely first doubts his election and regeneration, and then he would no longer have any support in his Baptism for trust in God's mercy.

333. **The sense in which these Benefits are Sealed to All.**—That these benefits are sealed to all, even though all are not saved, and even though there is no apostacy of the saints, can offer no objection, if we but remember that Baptism is the seal of the Covenant and thus seals the benefits in the same sense as that in which the Covenant grants them (Cf. §246). Holy Baptism seals us the granting as actually accomplished in the Covenant promise; it seals the benefits as granted, not as subjectively participated in as they are participated in through faith, and therefore not as warranting salvation. That this is the meaning of the Form is evident, to mention no more, from the passage "applying unto us that which we have in Christ." These words indicate that the Form means such a participation in the benefits of grace in virtue of Covenant and Baptism, which is indeed a "having them in Christ", but a "having them" which requires the application of the

Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Author of faith through which these benefits must be accepted and appropriated.

INFANT BAPTISM

334. **Ground for Infant Baptism.**—The ground for infant Baptism lies in the Covenant of Grace, in the fact that therein the Lord included not only the believers, but their seed as well, their natural seed. Because they are in the Covenant the Lord also desires that they bear the sign of the Covenant, Gen. 17:10. Baptism does not bring them into the Covenant, but they must be baptized because they are in he Covenant.

The infant children of believers must be baptized according to the Catechism since they, as well as the adult, are included in the Covenant and Church of God." As well as the adult, i. e., the adult believers. And this is correct, for the Lord has included in His covenant the believers and their seed, the seed as well as the believers, and they cannot have broken the Covenant. For them the Covenant holds, as well as for adult believers, and if they die in infancy, we may, on the ground of their being included in the Covenant, not doubt their election and salvation, according to the fathers at Dordrecht.

335. **Whether Baptism can be a Blessing to Infants.**—In Q. 66 of the Catechism, we find a negative answer to the question whether Baptism tends to be a subjective benefit to infants. Baptism cannot serve them by "more fully declaring and sealing the promise of the Gospel."

336. **Whether then Infant Baptism is Useless.**—It has been asserted that infant baptism is useless, and attempts have been made to use this as an argument against it, but wrongly for:

First, the believers have in that Baptism, as an undoubted witness that the Lord has taken their children in His Covenant, a strong plea at the throne of grace, and a strong motive for educating the children in the fear of the Lord.

Secondly, for the children it is, even though they are not conscious of the fact, a glorious benefit, that from the first days of their lives they may bear the banner and ensign of Christ, the sign of belonging to the kingly priesthood, to the heavenly nobility which God has separated from the world and accepted as His possession.

Thirdly, Baptism because it was ministered unto us when we were still infants, has so much greater value for strengthening faith when we are come to years of discretion, and can the more be "an undoubted witness that we have an eternal covenant of

grace with God." For thereby we are shown more clearly that our membership in the Covenant does not rest on any act on our part, but only on a sovereign act of grace on the part of God, and thus stands fixed. If one is later in life baptized upon his own confession a subjective element enters, i. e. that of his own confession concerning which all manner of doubts can arise.

337. **Supposed Regeneration as Ground for Baptism.**—It has of late been taught that supposed regeneration must be regarded as ground for Baptism. It is not the intention to deny that the Covenant is the ground for Baptism, but the idea is the result of the identification of the Covenant of Grace with the Counsel of Peace. According to this conception of the Covenant of Grace no one can be a member of the Covenant without being an object of saving grace. Now whether the children who are presented for Baptism are regenerated no one knows, but since the Covenant continues itself in the generations, and since election as a rule follows the line of the Covenant, one must suppose concerning them that they are regenerated and on this ground baptize them. Baptizing on the ground of supposed regeneration therefore virtually signifies baptizing on the ground of supposed membership in the Covenant.

Against this conception is to be objected:

First, that the view of the Covenant of Grace from which it originated, is at variance with Scripture and our Confessional Standards (Cf. §§236, 254ff.).

Secondly, that in this way holy baptism is deprived of all its power to aid in strengthening faith. At least this cannot be talked of in the sense that this is done in the Doctrinal Standards, i. e. by "more fully declaring unto us the promise of the Gospel," by being "an undoubted witness that we have an eternal Covenant of Grace with God." For the sacramental power of Baptism can never be stronger than that of the foundation upon which it rests. This foundation would then be a supposition. As a result Baptism cannot be more than a supposed Baptism, its sealing cannot be more than a supposed sealing, and its strengthening of faith cannot be more than a supposed strengthening. Can the one attacked by doubts, who threatens to despair of God's mercy, obtain any more satisfaction therefrom, than one who is famished can obtain from a supposed meal? And the Form declares that such an one has in his Baptism an "undoubted witness" that he has an eternal Covenant of grace with God."

It is because of this that the working of the Holy Baptism is sought in something entirely different, something of which nothing is to be found in the Doctrinal Standards, i. e. in a special work of grace on the part of the Holy Spirit from heaven, be it before, or during, or after Baptism. In the meantime the Covenant and

Baptism are deprived of their objectivity, which the Lord has so intentionally given them.

Thirdly, that the theory seems to loose sight of the fact that Baptism is not an institution of the Minister or of the Church, so that the question would be what they mean by it, and on what ground they administer it; but that it is an institution of God, so that the question is what He means by it, and on what ground He has ordered its administration. It is the Triune God who baptizes through the Church. With this in view, no one will think of asserting that the Triune God baptizes children on the ground of a supposition.

By the Synod of Utrecht of 1905, and by our Synod of 1908 which took over this decision, it was declared:

> "that according to the Confession of our Church the seed of the Covenant by virtue of the promise of God is to be regarded as regenerated as sanctified in Christ, until the contrary is shown in their confession and conduct when they are reaching years of discretion; but that it is less correct to say that Baptism is administered to children of believers on the ground of supposed regeneration, since the ground for Baptism is the command and the promise of God."

338. **The Questions Asked at the Administration of Baptism.**— Before Baptism is administered to the children three questions are asked of the parents. The purpose of these questions is to make it apparent that they understand the doctrine of Baptism, and therefore desire it for their children from pure motives, i. e. "not from custom or superstition, but that God's Covenant be sealed unto their child." And it is expressly demanded of them that they "answer sincerely" these questions. The first and second questions ask of them a confession, the third asks a promise.

1. The first question asks a confession concerning their child, i. e. if they confess that "although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His Church, ought to be baptized." To acknowledge that our children "are sanctified in Christ" means to acknowledge that they are in the Covenant, and share in the benefits thereof, and also that they are for that reason members of the Church, and that they ought to bear the sign of the members of the Church.

2. The second question asks a confession concerning themselves, i. e. "whether you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the Articles of the Christian Faith, and which is taught here in this Christian Church, to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation?"

As it is required in regard to every celebration of the Lord's Supper that before they partake of it a confession of faith is made

by the believers by reciting in their hearts the Apostolic Creed which is included in the prayer of the Form, so also is confession of faith demanded of those who desire Baptism for their children. They have acknowledged that their child, as a child of the Covenant has a right to Baptism. Now the second question is if they themselves have the right to lay claim to Baptism for their children and offer them for Baptism. That right only believers can possess. And the Church acknowledges those to be believers who confess that the doctrine of salvation is the true and perfect doctrine of salvation. To confess this, is demanded of them in the second place.

By demanding this confession of faith the Form excludes "adult members by Baptism" from the privilege of presenting their children for Baptism. It is a demand with which they cannot comply, a demand with which the Church cannot allow them to comply, even if they are willing to do it. The confession of faith asked is the very same as that which is asked for being admitted to the Lord's Supper, for in both cases the very same question is used. If, as they pretend, they cannot answer that question in the affirmative in the latter case, they can neither do it in the former. And the Church can not allow them to make that confession in order to have their children baptized, as long as they neglect to make that same confession in order to be admitted to the Lord's Supper in compliance with their Covenant obligation.

3. The third question demands a promise concerning the educaton, i. e. "whether you promise and intend (rather: take upon you) to see these children, when come to years of discretion, instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?"

This question is of course not merely asked because it is desired to make use of this opportunity to secure this promise from the parents; but as a question which stands in closest relation to Baptism, a question which as well as the two preceding questions is demanded by Baptism itself. From this it follows that the Form, even as the Catechism (Qu. 66), regards the working of Baptism as a rational and not as a mystical working, so that Baptism can accomplish its purpose only through instruction in the "aforesaid doctrine." Hence Baptism demands such instruction, and presenting a child for Baptism obliges one to assume the responsibility for it. Formerly it was custom that, besides the parents, "witnesses" also appeared to present the child for Baptism, and it is to them that the "help them to be instructed" has reference.

339. **Children of "Baptized Members."**—Formerly it has been general practice to permit "adult members by Baptism" to present their children for being baptized and to answer the questions, but in the latter part of the last century strong objections have been

raised against that usage. Not because it was held that these children had no right to Baptism, but because it was seen that such parents had not the right to appear to offer the children for Baptism.

That such children have a right to Baptism, is universally acknowledged, because the Scriptures do not teach that the line of the Covenant must be regarded as broken off already in the first generation, i. e. that already in the first generation the children of Covenant breakers are to be considered as having no share in the Covenant. On the contrary. From Ezek. 16:20, 21 it is evident that the children of idolators are still regarded by the Lord as members of the covenant, and there is no evidence that in this respect under the New Testament dispensation the Lord should be less longsuffering. Calvin was of the opinion that the "and show mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments" of the second Commandment was applicable to the line of the Covenant, and that therefore the promise of God does not only include the heirs of every believer in the first generation, but stretches over thousands of generations. And this is what is plainly told us in Deut. 7:9, Know therefore, that Jehovah thy God, He is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.

The difficulty therefore is not with the Children, but with the parents. Whether those children have a right to Baptism, is one question, but whether such parents have a right to lay claim on Baptism for their children, is another. Against this latter point the following objections are to be urged,

a) Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both Sacraments of the same Covenant of Grace; they belong together and are of equal worthiness and sanctity. Those, however, who wish to receive Baptism for their children, but not the Lord's Supper for themselves, separate the two from another and place Baptism below the Lord's Supper. This the Church may not permit. Still less may the Church make itself guilty of such desecration of Baptism by giving the right to Baptism for their children to those to whom it denies the right to the Lord's Supper.

b. That the Sacraments are signs and seals of the Covenant, and therefore are destined for the covenant members, i. e. for the believers and their immature seed. Adults who have not accepted the Covenant belong neither to the believers nor to the immature seed. Therefore they may not be given the right to the Sacraments, no more to Baptism for their children than to the Lord's Supper for themselves.

c. That the Church must guard against the desecration of God's Covenant by keeping everyone who does not walk according to

the demands of the Covenant from the Sacraments. And this is true as well of Baptism as of the Lord's Supper.

d. That the Church may not permit that those offering children for Baptism should utter, before God and the congregation, a "Yes" which on the ground of their disobedience to their sacred Covenant obligations cannot be regarded otherwise than false.

To overcome this abuse of "baptismal membership" it is not sufficient to deny to such parents the Baptism for their children, and permit the matter to rest there. Special labor must be bestowed upon these parents, as well in behalf of their salvation as in behalf of their children which remain unbaptized. In our days of blessed zeal for missions this work in our own circles may not be slighted. And the Church may not be indifferent to the fact that these children remain unbaptized. It is not its fault that these children do not receive the sign of the Covenant even though they have a right to it, but the fault of the parents, but they must earnestly and repeatedly be impressed with the responsibility which shall be so hard to bear before that Judge who received the children so lovingly and blessed them, and who utttered such severe words concerning those who "offended one of these little ones who believed in Him."

And if this labor appears vain, then censure must be applied. For the Church may not continue to tolerate as members of Christ those who openly remain disobedient. Thereby God's Covenant is desecrated and His anger brought upon the entire Church. God makes them responsible for their guilty condition, and the Church may not do otherwise. No more than it is permitted to keep those who have been censured to remain upon the same step of discipline year after year, so that they become accustomed to it, no more is it permitted to allow such "baptized members" to continue undisturbed as they are.

340. **Rejection of Infant Baptism.**—Infant Baptism has been rejected from the time of the Reformation by the Anabaptists, the Mennonites, and the Baptists. In our country the Baptist Church is one of the largest. This Church originated in the 17th century from Independent Puritans or Brownists, who had fled to the Netherlands and felt themselves attracted by the Mennonites. A part of them joined the Mennonites, and, after they had returned to England, founded there the first Baptist Church. Roger Williams, who in 1636 founded the first Baptist Church in America, was formerly a Puritan. Relationship between Baptist principles and the Puritan doctrine concerning the Covenant and the Sacraments as taught in the Westminster Symbols (Cf. §254) is indeed not hard to find. The idea that the Covenant of Grace was made with Christ and the elect in Him; that only after

having received saving grace the elect actually share in the Covenant; and that through Baptism possession of saving grace is sealed, must inevitably make a person holding these views willing to listen to the Mennonite arguments against infant Baptism, and make him easy to be won over to the notion that children cannot be baptized, because it cannot be known if they are in possession of saving grace, but that only adult persons can be baptized, since confession of faith, as evidence of the possession of saving grace, must precede Baptism, and only adults are in a position to make confession of faith.

That, from such a point of view, there is logic in this, is not to be denied; but the logic does not go far enough. Rejecting infant Baptism does not profit the Baptist much. He thinks that saving grace must necessarily precede Baptism. If that is so, then there must be certainty regarding a person's possessing that grace before he can be baptized. But does the Baptist have this certainty in regard to a confessing adult? The Baptist Church cannot possibly baptize a person on the ground that it knows him to be in actual possession of saving grace, but only on the ground of his confession, on the ground of what he himself says, which may be true and may be not true. The Baptist can only suppose that it is true, for he cannot judge the heart. His Baptism therefore amounts to Baptism on the ground of supposed regeneration; that is as far as his logic goes. To be truly logical the Baptist should not only reject infant Baptism, but follow the Quakers and abolish Baptism as a Sacrament altogether, for the logical conclusion of their views on this point is that Baptism is useless and worse than that.

It is worthless because such a Baptism, which is administered to a person on the ground of his confession as evidence that he possesses saving grace and is one of the elect, cannot have the least practical significance for him. He can regard his Baptism as a true Baptism, a true seal of his election and genuine conversion as long as he is convinced that his confession was genuine. But the moment he begins to doubt this, he loses the testimony of Baptism concerning his election and true conversion, and loses it entirely, for that same moment he must begin to doubt the genuineness of his Baptism. Such is always the result when objectivity is replaced by subjectivity.

It is worse than useless, because such a Baptism may be misleading. No Baptist can deny that his Baptism in thousands of cases has been administered to persons who were not fruitful branches of the True Vine, and thus had sealed to them according to their view what was not true. Such a seal, that cannot be trusted, exposes to the danger of being deceived by it, of being deceived by it for eternity.

We also require according to the ordinance of Christ a confession of faith before administering Baptism to converts from without the Church. But not as evidence of their election or true conversion, but as evidence that they belong to those whom the Lord will receive in His Covenant of Grace, and whom He wants to be sealed with the seal of that Covenant, be their confession true or false, for the Lord has commanded to baptize them, without qualifying the Church to judge the heart.

341. **The Arguments of the Baptists against Infant Baptism.**— The main arguments of the Baptists against infant Baptism are these three:

a) That in Mark 16:16 confession of faith is mentioned first and then Baptism, from which it follows, according to their assertion, that confession of faith must always precede Baptism. To this it may be answered that Jesus spake these words with reference to adults. This is evident not only from the preceding command: Preach the Gospel to all creation, in connection with which there can be no thought of children; but also from this, that these words, if they concerned children, would imply that all children who die before they are capable of active faith, are lost. For he that believeth not shall be condemned. As a declaration which concerns adults, and not children, that text must be taken into consideration with Baptism of adults, and is then taken into consideration by our Church.

b) That in all the Scriptures there is to be found no command that children must be baptized. Very true, we answer, but also very natural. With great emphasis the Lord has commanded that infants should be circumcised; the uncircumcised had even to be cut off from among his people, Gen. 17:14. And since Baptism was instituted in the place of circumcision, it is evident from the fact that there is no command to the contrary, that the Church of the New Testament dispensation was to proceed along the same lines as was done in the Old Testament dispensation. If that had not been the divine intention, then a command to the contrary was indispensable, and would not have been lacking, but there was not the slightest necessity of a direct command to proceed as in the Old Testament day.

c) That there no case of infant Baptism is found in Scriptures. Nowhere do we read that the Apostles or their helpers baptized infants. This is also a weak argument. More things may be mentioned which the Church has done from of old, and which the Baptists also do, of which no example is to be found in the Scriptures. And the fact is that such instances cannot be found by those only who do not desire to find them. We repeatedly find mention of baptizing families: Lydia was baptized "and her house-

hold, Acts 16:15, the jailer was baptized "and all his," Acts 16:33, Paul baptized "the household of Stephanas," 1 Cor. 1:16. The Baptist must prove that these were in every instance families without children. The burden of proof lies upon him all the more because infant Baptism was a general practice in the time of the earliest Church Fathers, as their writings testify. Tertullian, who died but a century after the Apostle John, fought infant Baptism; no better proof that it existed and was in use could be found. And as far as his arguments are concerned, he does not deny that this practice had the sanction of the Apostles, something he surely would have done if possible. He attacked infant Baptism because he ascribed to the rite as such the power to wash away all sin, and considered post-baptismal sins unpardonable, so that no one should be baptized who was not in a position to guard his life most scrupulously from the moment of his Baptism. With these views the Baptists agree as little as we do. To contend that infant Baptis is a product of post-apostolic times is doing violence to history.

The Baptists naturally also deny that Baptism has come in the place of circumcision. As proof we appeal to Col. 2:11, where the Colossians are told that they, Christians from the gentiles, did not have to be circumcised, as Judaising brethren would have it, because they were already circumcised "in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in Baptism." Now if they did not need to be circumcised because they were baptized, it must be because circumcision was replaced by Baptism.

To this the Baptists reply that the words "circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh" show that Paul refers not to Baptism but to regeneration, and that therefore the text cannot serve as a proof that Baptism came in the place of circumcision.

This objection, however, does not hold. It is true that the words point to spiritual things, to a spiritual purification, but it is not true that the Apostle does not refer to Baptism at all. He speaks of a spiritual purification, not apart from, but in connection with Baptism, as signified and sealed, we may even say as brought about (Cf. Rom. 6:3, 4) by Baptism, and that to strengthen his argument. What he means to say is that the Colossians in Baptism have already received the selfsame blessing that was the blessing of circumcision, and therefore need no circumcision. He calls Baptism "the circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh," in order to make it understood that in Baptism they have received not an external washing with water only, but exactly the same purification as that of circumcision. Thus the reference to the spiritual purification of Baptism makes this passage all the more a positive proof that Baptism has come

in the place of circumcision as a New Testament institution to the same purpose and of the same significance as circumcision, notwithstanding its different form.

On the other hand, by asserting that in this passage not Baptism but regeneration is meant as exempting from circumcision, the Baptists make Paul tell an untruth. For that regeneration should make circumcision unnecessary and superfluous, is an untruth. Abraham had surely been regenerated long before the Covenant was made with him, and yet he had to be circumcised as well as his seed and household, Gen. 17:24.

> Col. 2:11, 12, In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in Baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

342. **Immersion or Sprinkling.**—Another point of difference with the Baptists concerns the form of Baptism. According to them immersion is the only lawful form of Baptism. They do not acknowledge Baptism by sprinkling, and whoever has been baptized in this way must be baptized again when he joins the Baptist Church.

We have no objection to Baptism by immersion and even admit that it expresses more fully the meaning of Baptism, at least the idea of being buried with Christ and being raised with Him unto a new life, which is spoken of in Rom. 6. But we deny the right of the Baptists to claim that Baptism through immersion is the only valid Baptism. That Baptism may be administered by sprinkling as by immersion is to be concluded from passages such as Heb. 12:24, where with a view to Baptism mention is made of the "blood of sprinkling," as also from what the Lord said on the occasion of washing the feet of the disciples, i. e. that he whose feet are washed is "clean every whit," John 13: 9, 10. We find also in the case of the Lord's Supper that a part takes the place of the whole. The Baptists should also make a complete meal of the Lord's Supper.

343. **The Baptism of John.**—The Baptism of John is to a certain extent to be regarded as similar to the Christian Baptism. For this Baptism also contained a declaration of impurity, and was a Baptism for conversion and forgiveness of sins, Mark 1:4. But this Baptism could not be a Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace, for as such circumcision, though it was about to disappear, was still valid.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

344. **The Lord's Supper and Baptism.**—The Lord's Supper is, even as Holy Baptism, a Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace.

Both Sacraments therefore seal the same benefits and are of the same value. The Lord's Supper differs from Baptism in this that it is the Sacrament of remaining in Christ, of being nourished by Him and growing and increasing in Him, while Baptism is the Sacrament which signifies becoming a member of Christ. Hence not only the difference in form, but also the fact that Baptism is used but once, whereas the Lord's Supper is used again and again; that in receiving Baptism one is passive, so that the Sacrament can also be administered unto children, but that the Lord's Supper demands an active participation so that in order to partake thereof one must have come to years of discretion; and finally that the benefit sealed by Baptism is the washing away of sin, the deliverance from destruction, whereas the benefit sealed by the Lord's Supper is the communion with Christ, the being fed and nourished with the body and blood of Christ.

345. **The External Signs.**—The external signs of the Supper are bread, which is broken, as a sign and seal of Christ's body which was broken upon the cross; and wine, as a sign and seal of Christ's blood which was poured out upon the cross.

346. **Relation of these Signs to that which is Signified.**—Various opinions are held concerning the way in which the signs of bread and wine signify Christ's body and blood. At the institution of the Supper the Lord said of the bread: This is My body, and of the wine: This is My blood. The question is: What did He mean by the words "this is"?

1. The Roman Church teaches that bread and wine must be regarded as the real body and blood of Christ. As the Lord has said: This is My body, this must be actually the case; we may not think otherwise. Bread and wine must then really be changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood, so that it is no longer bread but flesh, Christ's flesh, and likewise the wine Christ's blood, and so that he who partakes of these signs, with his bodily mouth eats and drinks Christ's body and blood. And this miracle of the changing of the substance must take place while the priest speaks the words spoken by Christ. This is the doctrine of Transsubstantiation.

2. The Lutherans are of the opinion that the bread and wine do most certainly remain unchanged, but that nevertheless the words of Christ demand the belief that in the Lord's Supper Christ's flesh and blood are really partaken of with the bodily mouth. Hence they teach that Christ's flesh and blood is present in, with, and under the bread and wine, and this according to them has become possible because of the omnipresence of Christ's human nature, (Cf. §192, 230). Thus he who partakes of the

Lord's Supper eats and drinks with his bodily mouth two substances; he eats bread and drinks wine, and in, with, and under that bread and wine he eats and drinks at the same time Christ's flesh and blood. This is the doctrine of Consubstantiation.

3. The Reformed Churches teach that the words of Christ are to be interpreted figuratively. But not in the sense that the "this is" should be taken to mean merely "this signifies," so that the Lord's Supper would be only a figurative meal, in order thereby to be reminded of Christ's suffering and death, a commemoration thereof, as Zwingli taught. But in the sense that the "this is" means "this signifies and seals," therefore in the sense that for us the bread and wine are really Christ's body and blood, though not for the eye of the body, but for the spiritual eye of faith. The relation between the sign and that signified is then not unlike that of a banknote and the sum of money represented by it. The eye of the body in itself would see in it no more than a meaningless piece of paper but as the eye of the mind it sees that which is written thereon and the seal, and therefore regards the banknote in an entirely different light. Viewed with this eye, we say of a banknote to that amount: This is ten dollars. In the same way the natural eye views the bread and wine, and regards them as ordinary bread and wine and not otherwise; the bodily mouth eats and drinks nothing different. But the spiritual eye, the eye of faith, sees, so to speak, that something is written upon that bread and wine; that the Lord through the words spoken when the Sacrament was instituted has written something thereon, i. e. "This is My body," and "This is My blood," and thus the spiritual eye sees in that bread and wine something different from that which the natural eye sees; it sees in it Christ's body and blood, not in a material, but in a spiritual sense.

347. **Activity of Faith when Celebrating the Lord's Supper.**— From this it is evident that a proper celebration of the Lord's Supper is a matter of active faith. The natural eye, the natural hand, and the natural mouth must be active in the ceremony, but not they alone; the eye of faith, the hand of faith, and the mouth of faith must also necessarily be active.

And this activity concerns four things:

a) When the eye of the body views the bread and wine, then the eye of faith must see in it Christ's flesh and blood;

b) When the eye of the body sees how the bread and wine are offered to us, then the eye of faith must see in this act the offering to us of the flesh and blood of Christ;

c) When the hand of the body receives the bread and wine and appropriates them, and the mouth of the body eats and drinks, then the hand of faith must in this act receive and appropriate

Christ's flesh and blood, and the mouth of faith must eat and drink thereof;

d) And when the eye of the body sees the bread and wine in the hand of the body as ours through our having received and appropriated it, so that we eat it and drink of it as ours, the eye of faith must see therein a visible token and pledge that likewise and as truly Christ is ours, since in bread and wine we have received Him from God and have appropriated Him by faith.

To celebrate the Lord's Supper in this way is indeed eating and drinking spiritually at a spiritual banquet, and the blessed spiritual result will be that we are fed and nourished with the body and blood of Christ, for He has said: He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, John 6:54, 55.

It is therefore evident that, to celebrate the Lord's Supper properly, our attention is required; the external signs and acts must be watched intelligently, for otherwise our faith cannot be active in a manner demanded by the signs and acts. The attention may not wander, may not busy itself with other thoughts, however good they may be in themselves, but must be fixed upon the Lord's Supper. To celebrate the Supper without being attentive, only with the eye, the hand, and the mouth of the body, is to celebrate it as a Roman Catholic, who thinks that it is enough if he but receive the external signs. In that case children would also be able to celebrate it, and would have to be admitted to it, as it is the custom in the Greek Church, where they have Communion for children. And as our attention is so necessary, addresses at its administration threaten to do more evil than good. In the Sacrament the Lord Himself speaks to us, and we must listen to Him.

348. **The Lord's Supper as Sealing of the Promise of the Gospel.** —That which is signed and sealed in the Lord's Supper for the strengthening of faith is the promise of the Gospel (Cat. Qu. 66); and there are three things belonging to the Gospel (Cf. §316):

1. An offer of grace, or the message "that He grants us freely the remission of sin and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross." This offer, this granting is signified and sealed in the offering and granting of bread and wine, as the signs and seals of Christ's body and blood. As signs they tell us that in like manner as, and as seals that as truly as bread and wine are offered us, just so and just as truly Christ's body and blood are offered and given us. It signifies and seals this giving:

a. as truly a giving. Bread and wine are offered us in the Lord's Supper freely, without money and without price, nothing

is demanded of us for them. In the same manner and just as truly Christ is offered us freely, absolutely without money or price.

b. as a well-meant giving. For it is well-meant when the Minister offers us in Christ's stead that bread and wine; no one doubts that; no one extends his hand for it in vain. In the same manner and just as truly the offer and granting of Christ is well-meant.

c. as a personal giving. Bread and wine are extended to us personally and placed in our hands; the "not only to others, but to me also" is so evident in the case of the Supper that no one can doubt it, and no one does doubt it. In the same manner and just as truly Christ is offered and granted to us personally.

Thus in the Supper the Lord meets the weak faith which is so often subject to attacks by giving to its doubting questions, which usually concern just this problem, an affirmative answer, which can be seen with the eyes and touched with the hands.

2. A demand of faith. In the Supper bread and wine must be accepted and appropriated. It is expressly stated in the words of the institution "Take, eat," and "Drink ye all of it." Thus the faith which the Gospel demands is signified and sealed by declaring and assuring us that in the same manner and just as truly Christ's body and blood must be accepted; that in the same way and just as truly there must be an appropriation of grace, a true eating of Christ's flesh and a drinking of his blood through faith, since otherwise these which are food and drink indeed cannot nourish our souls for life eternal. And this is intended to urge us to an actual taking of Christ there at the table with the hand of faith, and an actual eating and drinking of Him with the mouth of faith.

3. The assurance that he who believes shall be saved. By taking bread and wine with the hands they become ours; we know that they then are ours; we would be indignant, as at an injustice done us, if any one were to take them from us; we are so certain of their being ours that without questioning we eat and drink thereof. And this is intended to signify and seal unto us that in the same way and just as certainly Christ is ours through the acceptance of faith.

Thus we see how the Lord's Supper is destined to be to us "a pledge of His hearty love and faithfulness towards us," and to lead us to the assurance of faith or to strengthen this assurance anew. It does that by signifying and sealing unto us that the promise of the Gospel is made to us personally, that we personally share in its free and well-meant offer of grace, that it does become to the believer, who appropriates for himself this gift of grace, a sign and seal of personal possession, as truly as the signs of bread and wine became his personal possession through appropriation

with the hand of the body, or, as the Catechism expresses it, "as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ" (Catechism, Qu. 75).

349. **The Blessing of the Lord's Supper.**—We receive the blessing of the Lord's Supper when it actually brings us the fruit which it is intended to bring. As a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace it is intended to signify and seal unto us the truthfulness of the promise and the certainty of our having part in it. At the same time it is to be unto us a remembrance of the sufferings and death of our Savior. Consequently the blessing of the Lord's Supper consists in this that a) we are led thereby to a renewed appropriation of Christ, and feel ourselves the more assured of being His own; and b) that being remembered by the broken bread and the shed wine of the price at which we are bought, our hearts are attuned to thankfulness, to renewed dedication to the God and Father of all grace, who so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who purchased all the benefits of redemption at the price of His own precious blood.

He who celebrates the Lord's Supper with this blessing, will not celebrate it in a cold, barren frame of mind. This does not mean, however, that he who celebrates it with emotion, receives its real blessing, although many suppose so. Emotions may be but superficial, arising from the nerves instead of from the heart, and in that case they are of no value. Then they are even misleading, because they are satisfying to the feelings, so that one is inclined to attach a value to them which they do not have, and regard them as a work of the Holy Spirit when they are not. But it is very different when the things that are proclaimed to us in the Lord's Supper in so simple yet so striking manner, viz. the richness of the grace of God and of the love of Christ, who for our sins permitted His body to be broken and His blood shed, grip us, so that we are moved to tears. Still the real blessing consists in the strengthening of faith. When we are eating an ordinary meal, it is to be appreciated thankfully if we can partake of the food with a good appetite, and it is an evidence of good health; nevertheless the purpose for which we partake of the food and the real blessing to be obtained from it, is that we be strengthened and nourished; the same is the case with respect to the spiritual meal.

350. **Unworthy Partaking.**—In 1 Cor. 11:27-29 we are warned against "eating and drinking unworthily" (R. V. "in an unworthy manner"), "not discerning the body of Christ," and "eating and drinking damnation (R. V. "judgment") to himself." Much misconception has prevailed concerning these things.

"To eat and drink unworthily" does not mean: eating and drinking while considering himself to be unworthy, as if one partaking of the Sacrament in the right manner must feel himself worthy. That would be the feeling of selfrighteousness, and he who is self-righteous is surely not the right partaker of the Lord's Supper. Quite the contrary. The more we feel ourselves unworthy to approach to the Lord's table, the more He will consider us worthy partakers of His Supper. The word "unworthily," and more plainly yet the rendering of the R. V.: "in an unworthy manner," shows that the meaning is not: unworthiness as far as the person is concerned, but unworthiness as his eating and drinking is concerned, the manner in which he eats and drinks. To eat and drink in an unworthy manner is to partake of the Sacrament in a manner which conflicts with the worthiness of the ceremony. And this is done if it is done without seriousness, without attention, without respect, without the right purpose, in other words, when it is done as some of the Corinthians did it, concerning whom the Apostle writes in verses 20-22. It is further described in the words:

"Not discerning the body of Christ." For this signifies: not holding at its true value the body and blood of the Lord, which is the food and drink of the Lord's Supper; not to regard it as that which it really is; hence eating and drinking bread and wine, not as signs and seals of Christ's flesh and blood, but as ordinary bread and ordinary wine. With a view to such misuse Paul asked the Corinthians: Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? And this each one does who partakes without seriousness and respect and attention, and not with the right purpose. Whoever therefore partakes of it in that manner:

"Eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself." This does not mean that he incurs eternal damnation, as if it were an unpardonable sin; for as an unpardonable sin the Scriptures mention only the sin against the Holy Spirit, Matt. 12:31. But it means that by so underrating the body of Christ one brings upon himself the displeasure of the Lord, as was the case in Corinth. Their judgment consisted in the fact that many were sick and weak among them, and many died, as Paul says in the 30th verse.

Therefore not only hypocrites and those who are not truly converted, but believers also can eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the body of the Lord, and thus eat and drink a judgment unto themselves. The example in Corinth proves this. Paul chides the guilty very earnestly, but does not say that they are not believers, or that he doubts their faith.

1 Cor. 11:27-29, Wherefor whosoever shall eat of the bread and drink of the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and

so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body.

1 Cor. 11:30, For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep.

Matt. 12:31, Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven.

351. For this Reason Self-examination Necessary.—In the same passage the Scriptures teach us that self-examination is necessary for the Lord's Supper to guard against partaking in an unworthy manner and against bringing a judgment upon oneself. It is while the Apostle is speaking of this and with a view to this, that he makes the admonition: But let a man prove himself.

The question is, how must this self-examination serve to protect us from this danger? Here, too, there has been much misconception. The opinion is usually held that self-examination must make it clear to us that we have a portion in Christ and thus in His Supper, and that he who has a portion in it cannot make himself guilty of not discerning the body, nor eat or drink unto himself judgment. But this is not the correct conception of self-examination, for:

a) It arises from the idea that the Lord's Supper itself, aside from the activity of faith accompanying it, will give us assurance concerning our state of grace, so that he who partakes of the Supper must first be certain of this lest he cause the Sacrament to lie. But this idea is incorrect, (Cf. §§328, 348).

The Supper by the activity of faith will bring to assurance; the latter is a fruit of the Supper, and may therefore not be placed as a condition for partaking of the Supper.

b) From this conception it would follow that he who is assured on good grounds of his portion in Christ would have little difficulty with self-examination for the Supper, and little need for such self-examination. But the Apostle says: Let a man prove himself, and the Form also evidently regards self-examination as something which is necessary for every believer.

c) And it is not true that he who has this assurance is protected against all danger; that a true believer cannot make himself guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (Cf. §350). A self-examination which should but busy itself with the question: Have I a portion in Christ? would, no matter how difficult for those of little faith, not go far enough, and would not answer to its purpose.

The point with which self-examination must concern itself, is an altogether different one. It is this: whether we are in the right frame of mind to proclaim the death of the Lord. Just as

the questions put at the Baptism ceremony concern themselves with the proper state of mind for sincerely offering the child for Baptism, thus the self-examination for the Supper concerns itself with the proper state of mind for partaking of that Sacrament. The purpose is that, if self-examination reveals that we lack the right state of mind we may become active in attempting to procure it in the way directed.

352. **The Three Parts of Self-examination.**—There are three matters which pertain to the proper state of mind for partaking of the Lord's Supper: self-humiliation, faith, and thankfulness. And toward these three matters the three parts of the self-examination are directed, as the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper described them. Practically we have again the three parts of misery, deliverance, and thankfulness.

1. **Self-humiliation.** The Form prescribed as the first part of self-examination the following:

> That every one consider by himself, his sins and the curse due to him for them, to the end that he may abhor and humble himself before God: considering that the wrath of God against sin is so great, that (rather than it should go unpunished) he hath punished the same in his beloved Son Jesus Christ, with the bitter and shameful death of the cross.

Thus the first we have to do, the Form tells us, is to consider our sins and the curse due to us for them, to meditate upon them, and view them in the light of the cross, in order to come to a deeper realization of their fearfulness, that we abhor and humble ourselves before God.

This is altogether different from the quite generally prevailing idea concerning this self-examination. According to that idea it must consist first of all, or even exclusively, in searching ourselves for "marks of grace" (Cf. §433ff.), in order to be assured of having the right to approach the Lord's table, and to obtain the boldness to do so. To those so minded it must seem unadvisable to consider their sins and the curse due for them, because that would result in taking from them what boldness to approach they may have.

The truth is, however, that it is altogether wrong to think that boldness to approach the Lord's table must be obtained from self-satisfaction, or even from anything good in us as gift of divine grace. The true ground for boldness does not lie in ourselves, but in the grace of God, who is willing to receive sinners and to eat with them, Luke 15:2, in order to glorify the riches of His grace in them, and who, although knowing our sin and misery better than we do, has commanded: "this do in remembrance of Me." "Therefore," as it is said in the Form, "we rest assured that no sin or infirmity, which still remaineth against our will, in us, can

hinder us from being received of God in mercy, and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly meat and drink." As Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, so His Supper is not a supper for those who are holy, for they have no need of the crucified body and shed blood, but for those who through partaking of the Lord's Supper will "acknowledge that they lie in the midst of death." If we understand this, then the consciousness of our misery will not restrain us, but will rather urge us to partake, because it is a true mark that we are just those whom the Lord will receive at His table, and because it causes us to hunger and thirst for that which is the reality of the Sacrament—the righteousness of Christ.

2. **Faith** in the promise of the Covenant, in the grace of God in Christ. According to the Form the second part of the self-examination is the following:

> That every one examine his own heart, whether he doth believe this faithful promise of God, that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given him as his own, yea, so perfectly, as if he had satisfied in his own person for all his sins, and fulfilled all righteousness.

Here self-examination is urged with respect to "the faithful promise of God," with which is meant the promise which the Catechism in Qu. 66 and 21 calls the "promise of the Gospel." It concerns an examination whether we have saving faith, as the Catechism describes this in Qu. 21 (Cf. §415). This faith is indispensable for celebrating the Lord's Supper, because, if consciousness of misery were not attended with faith in divine grace in Christ, there would assuredly be no courage for celebrating the Supper, and also because, if this faith is lacking, there cannot be that activity of faith which is demanded for the right celebration of the Supper. Without this activity of faith it would but be an external eating and drinking of the bread and wine, and thus an eating and drinking a judgment unto oneself: not discerning the body of the Lord.

And now the question is: Is this faith present? If so, in what measure? If the self-examination shows that faith is lacking, or that it is present but that it is weak and lacks the right clearness, then we must become active in prayer and investigation of the Scriptures, so that faith or clearness of faith may be obtained.

The words of the Form: "Secondly, that every one examine his own heart, whether he doth believe this faithful promise of God, that all his sins are forgiven him," etc., are not infrequently understood as indicating that he who partakes of the Lord's Supper must be assured of his salvation in Christ. But then these words are not read as they are actually written. There would be

no essential difference if they read: "if he truly knows that all his sins have been forgiven for Christ's sake," for that is true in regard to every Covenant member and must be believed by him (Cf. §331). But with a view to the erroneous opinion in question it is noteworthy that the exact words are different. What is said here to be necessary is to believe the promise, the faithful promise of God, the Covenant promise, the same promise that was sealed to us in Baptism, so that in the Thanksgiving following Baptism the Church thanks and praises God "that thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of thy Son Jesus Christ." Nor is such teaching that the assurance of faith is necessary for partaking of the Lord's Supper to be found in the expression: "so perfectly, as if he had satisfied in his own person for all his sins, and fulfilled all righteousness." For this also concerns the promise, as a promise in which the righteousness of Christ is given, not partially but fully. The Form even contains words which expressly state the contrary, viz. that we must not permit ourselves to be restrained from partaking of the Sacrament even though "we have not perfect faith, but have daily to strive with the weakness of our faith."

That, however, the celebration of the Lord's Supper demands faith in the promise is self-evident. It is the promise that is signified and sealed by it, and a person who does not believe the promise, cannot believe the signifying and sealing of it by the Sacrament either. That faith therefore is meant here, and not belief concerning our own condition, however close may be the relation between the two.

Just a few remarks concerning this matter in conclusion, viz.:

a. That the assurance of faith is not even necessary to be saved, and how can it then be regarded as necessary for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

b. That according to this demand only those could come to the Lord's Supper who are strong in the faith, so that the weak would have to stay away. That is self-contradictory, even absurd. It would imply that the Lord's Supper, which was given as a means of grace for the strengthening of faith, is accessible only for those who are already strong in faith, but closed for those who are weak in faith, and therefore most in need of it.

c. That to make the assurance of faith the one thing needful for celebrating the Lord's Supper is asking too much of those who are weak in faith, and not enough of those who are strong in faith. It is asking too much of those who are weak in faith. For if such a one be asked if he abhors himself before God, if he believes in the grace of God in Christ, and if he desires to serve the Lord, then he will dare to answer affirmatively and say: if

that is what is necessary for partaking of the Lord's Supper, then I dare do so. But if he is told that he must be assured of his state of grace, then he, whom the Lord earnestly desires to see at His table, and who is so very much in need of being strengthened, will be frightened away. It is true that if one is in that condition it is the result of ignorance, of lack of insight, but for that very reason he is all the more in need of having the promise of the Gospel declared and sealed unto him. — And from him who is strong in faith it is demanding not enough. For, as has been shown, the well-grounded conviction of having a portion in Christ, is no guarantee that we are in the right frame of mind for celebrating the Lord's Supper, and that we are in no danger of eating judgment unto ourselves. In this respect the one weak in faith may be in a much better position than the one strong in faith.

3. **Love, and thankfulness.** According to the Form the third part of self-examination must consist in an examination of one's conscience:

> "Whether he purposeth henceforth to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life, and to walk uprightly before him; as also, whether he hath laid aside unfeignedly all enmity, hatred, and envy, and doth firmly resolve henceforth to walk in true love and peace with his neighbor."

The Supper is a lovefeast; it presents to us so strikingly the love of God and of Christ, and in remembrance thereof we celebrate. It is a banquet of communion with God and with each other. And it must make us disposed to mutual love and thankfulness. Therefore, whoever is not so inclined is not the suitable person for the table of the Lord. Such a heart cannot be open for the love of God, and hence can not be inclined to love and thankfulness. A "curse in the camp" would he be whose inner disposition would conflict with what he openly reveals and does. For that reason one's conscience must be investigated, whether it is lovingly inclined toward the brotherhood; and everything that conflicts with that inclination must be removed.

Such matters can demand action according to Matt. 18, i. e. if it concerns a difference which can be settled satisfactorily only in that way. But the Form speaks correctly of laying "aside all enmity, hatred and envy;" therefore simply laying aside. If, mindful of one's own faults and imperfections, one can do this, then that is sufficient. But then one must do so "heartily" and "unfeignedly," and that which hindered must be put away forever. If this cannot be done; if we think ourselves offended too seriously, especially if we think that the salvation of the brother demands that he see his sin and confess, then we must proceed according to Matt. 18.

If the Lord desired that no one approach Him with offerings when he knew that his brother had aught against him; if He demanded that if any one remembered this as he stood prepared to sacrifice, he should, instead of offering, first go and be reconciled with his brother, and then come and offer his gifts, then it is also certain that the Lord does not desire to see us at His table if our hearts are not at peace with our neightbors. It occurs sometimes that one sees in this command not to approach the table under the above circumstances a not unwelcome permission to remain away, but such a state of mind testifies to great spiritual apathy. A child feels it deeply, when, as punishment, it is not permitted to be seated at the table with the family, but such Christians seem to have little of the characteristics of true children and little of that childlike feeling.

> Matt. 5:23, 24, If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

353. **Who Are under Obligation to Celebrate the Lord's Supper.**—To the question: who are under obligation to celebrate the Lord's Supper, the answer must be: all covenant members who have reached years of discretion. This does not mean that these are all capable of doing so, nor that they must all do so even if they are not capable of doing so, but only that the obligation of doing so rests upon them. This obligation follows:

1. From their membership in the Covenant. This Covenant binds the member to obedience to all the institutions of the Covenant, and among these we find the Lord's Supper. The Lord has commanded: Do this in remembrance of me. And how greatly must the covenant member take to heart this last command of the Lord, given as with dying lips, since to this death, of which the Lord's Supper is a remembrance, he owes so many benefits of inestimable value. The more so since neglecting these signs and seals of the Covenant before God is also neglecting and breaking the Covenant, for which reason this sin under the Old Testament had to be punished with being cut off from among the people, Gen. 17:14; Num. 9:13.

2. From Baptism. For by this we are "admonished of, and obliged to a new obedience," which obedience includes the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Not to do this is to deny one's Baptism. And it has been rightfully said, in the same sense as that in which Elijah urged Israel to make a decided choice between the Lord and Baal, instead of going limping between two sides, that the Covenant member who has arrived at years of discretion should either accept his Baptism by making confession and celebrating the

Lord's Supper, or otherwise renounce his Baptism and cast away from himself the cords of the Covenant.

3. From public confession of faith, as thereby we have on our own accord not only accepted the Covenant with its obligations and Baptism with its obligations, but also have expressly and solemnly promised that "with the help and grace of God we will lead a new holy life." To neglect the Lord's Supper is certainly not in conformity with that promise (Cf. §272).

The enforcement of the obligation to celebrate the Lord's Supper is a matter of not permitting God's Covenant to be desecrated, and therefore a sacred duty of the Church. If with respect to the administering of Baptism we must proceed in the Old Testament way, by baptizing children as under the Old Testament dispensation children were circumcised, why should not the Church just as well have to demand decidedly from all members, who have arrived at years of discretion that they celebrate the Lord's Supper and otherwise remove them from the Church, as under the Old Testament dispensation it was positively required that such Covenant members celebrate the Passover or be cut off from among their people, Num. 9:13. It is true that the Passover had also a national significance, but it was for that reason no less a Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace (Cf. §329). And when the Israelite who wilfully neglected to celebrate the Passover had to be cut off from among his people, it was certainly not in the first place because he neglected to celebrate a national feast, but because such an act was an act of slighting and rejecting God's Covenant.

To be unconverted, not to have that which is necessary to true celebration of the Sacrament, can not be a valid excuse. No member of the Covenant of Grace has the right to remain in that state, since in that Covenant he has the promise that he shall receive all he needs, if he prays. It was not counted as a valid excuse for the Israelite with respect to the celebration of the Passover.

Still less can it be a valid excuse for a person who confesses himself to be a believer, that he does not feel himself in a vein to partake of the Lord's Supper. There are such people who let their celebrating or not celebrating the Lord's Supper depend upon their feelings, whether they feel more or less disposed to it. If upon the morning to the celebration they feel somewhat disinclined to go, they calmly stay at home. Although they know that our Lord Jesus has said: Do this in remembrance of Me, they act as if they can do according to their own pleasure. There is in such a conduct no evidence of that childlike fear of God, which is primarily a fear of displeasing Him through disobedience.

354. **Open or Close Communion.**—In Churches of other denom-

inations the bread and wine is usually passed around and offered to all present without distinction. It is then asserted that this is the proper way, because no Church has the right to regard the Lord's Supper as a matter to which it has an exclusive title, permitting only those to partake of it who are its members. Other Christians, it is asserted, also have a right to it, even though they do not belong to just that Church. Such views, however, are half-truths. The Consistory is in duty bound to guard the Lord's Supper against desecration, and the only way to do this is to limit the right to partake of it to those who are confessing members of the local Church that is celebrating, and who are subject to its discipline. Our Communion tables therefore are not open to every one (open Communion), but only to those who are confessing members (close Communion).

Exceptions are made, however, in admitting as "guests" outsiders who are confessing members of our own or of other denominations, on condition that they have previously secured permission from the Consistory, having convinced that body that they are confessing churchmembers, sound in the faith as to fundamental truths, and not under censure. Occasionally it occurs that even members by Baptism are admitted, who feel themselves constrained to approach the table, but this is done under the supposition that they will, as soon as possible, make confession. But this permission cannot be granted to them a second time if they do not fulfill that expectation.

355. **Eucharistic Preaching.**—It is prescribed in the Church Order that at the time of the celebration of the Lord's Supper the preaching of the Word must be adapted to that celebration.

Especially the preparatory sermon has since the Reformation always been considered as of great importance, but not always for the same reason. Originally it was meant to be really a preparatory sermon, a sermon tending "to prepare the hearts for the celebration." Circumstances in the old Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, however, brought it about that the preparatory service and the preparatory sermon gradually acquired another significance. In the struggle with Spain the Church had felt itself constrained, in order to weaken Catholicism, to receive in its fellowship all those who were willing to become members, and one of the natural results was relaxation of discipline. There were many members who by celebrating would desecrate the Supper, but the Church officers felt themselves powerless to keep such from doing so by means of discipline. There was, however, one thing by means of which something could be accomplished, and this was the preparatory service, and in place of being a preparatory service it became what may be called a "test sermon." In that ser-

mon it was stated who was spiritually entitled to partake, which more and more began to consist in an enumeration of the marks of grace, and further in a very earnest way a warning was made against eating and drinking judgment to oneself.

Through the grace of God circumstances among us are entirely different. It is not the task of the preparatory service to guard the Supper from desecration, but that of discipline, and among us the discipline can again be maintained. They who through profession or conduct show themselves people who by partaking of the Supper would desecrate it, are kept away through discipline. Still there are those who nevertheless desire that the preparatory sermon be a "test sermon." This is, however, not correct, for: a) That is not its duty; it must really be a preparatory sermon; b) Thereby the erroneous supposition is strengthened that to partake of the Supper one must be assured of his state of grace; c) The Supper is not desecrated through a hypocrite's partaking thereof, and a hypocrite does not permit himself to be restrained because of a stern "test sermon," but the narrower the entrance to the Supper is made, the more likely he will be a partaker; d) But those who are weak in faith, although upright, are most certainly restrained by such a sermon. The fact that many still have so great an apprehension of the Lord's Supper as to neglect it, is an effect of the "test sermon."

Hence, the preparatory sermon must not regard as its task that which is the task of discipline, but it must seek to prepare the congregation for partaking of the Supper of the Lord. To the believers it must point out the correct frame of mind for partaking of the Lord's Supper, and urge them earnestly to try to obtain this correct state of mind through self-examination and prayer, in order that they may partake thereof with the greater blessing.

The post communion sermon must serve to point out to the congregation that which it has received from the Lord in the Supper, and also that which it has itself done in the celebrating thereof, impressing upon the minds what that must mean for faith and conduct.

356. **Manner of Administering the Lord's Supper.**—There are two ways of administering the Lord's Supper, called "sitting" and "walking" Communion. It is called "sitting communion" when those who partake thereof remain seated in their places and bread and wine is brought to them there. It is called "walking communion" when the members leave their seats and go to the table or altar and receive the signs there. In our Churches the latter manner is mostly in use, in such a way that the Supper is administered in several "tables" in succession. The first manner has this advantage that the entire ceremony is completed in one act

so that the unity of the Supper becomes more apparent, and a fatiguing repetition is avoided. But in this case care must be taken that those who are to partake are seated in definite seats, and that no others occupy these.

357. **The Eucharistic Collection.**—The custom that at the celebration of the Lord's Supper an opportunity is given for offering special gifts is founded on the Scriptures. Not only was it required under the Old Testament that at religious ceremonies offerings be brought, but also under the New Testament do we find that at the Lord's Supper, as that was celebrated under the leadership of the Apostles, gifts in food and drink were brought and later distributed to the poor. In accordance with the latter it is held that the eucharastic collection should be destined for the poor.

FIFTH DIVISION

THE DOCTRINE OF THE APPLICATION OF GRACE

INTRODUCTION

358. **The Application of Grace the Work of the Holy Spirit.**— The application of the grace merited through Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit seems in general to be to complete the works of God (Cf. §86, d). Thus in the realm of nature it is the Spirit who brings to life, Gen. 1:2, John 6:23; the final act of God in the creation of man was "to breathe into his nostrils the breath of life," and this "breathing" of God, through which man became a living soul, points to the Holy Spirit, Job 33:4. Further it is the Holy Spirit who gives gifts and talents for knowledge and art, Exod. 31:3, 4, and who gives spiritual gifts as He wills, 1 Cor. 12:8, 11.

In accordance with this the Holy Spirit in the realm of grace also performs the last, the completing work of deliverance, i. e. that of the application of grace. Salvation becomes ours, as we have seen (§246) through its being freely offered to us by God in the Gospel, and through its being appropriated by us through faith. In regard to the first the Holy Spirit is the Sender of the preachers of the Gospel, Acts 13:4, the Lord of the harvest, who sends out the laborers, Matt. 9:38. And in regard to the second He is the Author of regeneration and faith, 1 Cor. 12:3b.

Gen. 1:2, And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

John 6:33a, It is the Spirit that giveth life.

Job 33:4, The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.

Exod. 31:3, 4, And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise skillful works, to work in gold, and in silver and in brass, etc.

1 Cor. 12:8, 11, For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same

Spirit. But all these things worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will.

1 Cor. 12:3b, And no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in (through) the Holy Spirit.

359. **Necessity of the work of the Spirit.**—Because of the spiritual impotence into which man has sunk, the saving work of the Holy Spirit is as well necessary as that of Christ. For the fact that Christ has procured salvation and that the right is given us to come and take it freely, would not benefit us in the least, if it were left to us to avail ourselves of these blessings and to put ourselves in possession of them, instead of the Holy Spirit enabling us thereto. We are not even able of ourselves to believe the glad tidings of the Gospel as true and trustworthy, or to say, Jesus is Lord, Eph. 2:8, how then would we be able to make ourselves new creatures and to arise from spiritual death? Yet these things are absolutely necessary to enter heaven, John 3:5; Rev. 21:27.

Eph. 2:8, For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

John 3:5, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Rev. 21:27, And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie.

360. **Denial of the Work of the Holy Spirit.**—The necessity of the work of the Spirit is denied by the Pelagians and the Antinomians, two tendencies which are opposed to each other, but, in this instance, arrive at the same result.

The Pelagians assert that man is of himself able to appropriate through faith and conversion the salvation which Christ has procured. They, therefore, lay an inordinate emphasis upon the work of man. Upon that in the last analysis depends his salvation. It is true that the work of Christ is of the greatest importance, since thereby only salvation became possible, but whether we shall really be saved depends upon ourselves.

The Antinomians push the worthlessness of all work of man to an extreme. Christ has completed all, they say, and therefore from our side nothing more is necessary, not even sanctification. A believer can freely live in all manner of sin, for that does not detract from his salvation. Christ has fulfilled the law for him, and now he is free from the law, and need not concern himself with one of its commands (Cf. §142). To hold that he is still bound to obedience to the law, that his works adds to or detracts from his salvation, is to impeach the perfection of the work of Christ, to foster a tendency to seek to gain one's salvation through works, to change the Covenant of Grace into a Covenant of Works.

Thus in their valuation of the work of man Pelagians and Anti-

nomians are diametrically opposed to one another. Still they come to the same result with respect to the work of the Spirit; they both deny it. The Pelagian has no need of the application of grace through the Holy Spirit, for he can apply grace to himself. And the Antinomian has no need of it, for regeneration, conversion, sanctification, the benefits of which the Holy Spirit is the Worker, he regards as matters of slight importance. That which Christ has done for us is quite sufficient for him; he is of the opinion that justification includes all that is necessary for salvation, and he has no eye for the necessity of Christ in us.

361. **These errors a Warning to Us.**—These two errors must be a warning to us with respect to the treatment of the doctrine of the Application of Grace. The underlying principles involved are the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. According to the principle of the sovereignty of God, the principle that "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things," Rom. 11:36, God is the sole and entire cause of our salvation, so that all possibility of boasting is precluded, Eph. 2:8, 9. And according to the principle of the responsibility of man God does not deal with man as if he were a mere object, a thing, but as with a being who was created a person, a free, rational, moral agent, whom has been given the right to choose his own way, but is responsible for the choice he makes, so that, if he wants to be saved, he must walk in the way that leads heavenward, and otherwise blame his destruction to no one but himself.

These two principles assert themselves as governing principles especially in the doctrine of the Application of Grace, and to our mind they lead in different directions. As a consequence we may feel tempted to choose between the two and to take as our governing principle either the sovereignty of God or the responsibility of man. That is what both Pelagians and Antinomians have done, and their errors show with what results. The Pelagian error is the result of choosing the responsibility of man as governing principle, ignoring or at least minimizing the sovereignty of God, and the Antinomian error is the result of doing exactly the reverse.

Both these principles must be maintained. Nothing may be detracted from the principle of the sovereignty of God, as does the Pelagian, who lays so much stress upon the responsibility of man that he will hear of no spiritual impotence and of no personal election. Neither may anything be detracted of the responsibility of man, as the Antinomian does, so that he will hear nothing of this responsibility and considers the application of grace as to take place entirely without us, as to mere passive objects.

Fact is that it is not even possible to detract from the responsibility of man without thereby detracting from the sovereignty of

God, for the responsibility of man is from God. God Himself has created man not as a mere object, but as a person, and for this reason treats with him as with a person, also in the application of grace. He Himself has willed "secondary causes" to His own glorification. His government would be much more simple and understandable, but at the same time much less wonderful and less to His glory, if there were no secondary causes, no creatures with freedom of action. Hence we err greatly indeed, if we think that for maintaining the sovereignty of God and for the sake of His honor we must reason away the existence of secondary causes, or reduce their significance to a minimum. To do this is to minimize the infiniteness of God, as if it were impossible for Him to execute His counsel to the full and yet leave to secondary causes room for free action.

362. **The Infra and Supra Question and the Application of Grace.**—Between the extremes of Pelagianism and Antinomianism lies the Supra and Infra question. It is not surprising therefore that these views also have a bearing on the treatment of the truths belonging to this part of Reformed Doctrine, and here this question proves itself to be a question not of only theoretical but also of practical import, a question affecting practical life. Insofar as the question concerns the first part of of the Doctrine of Salvation (the Doctrine of God), it can remain a question for the study (Cf. §106); but when it enters into the realm of Soteriology, it is most certainly of significance for the congregation.

The difference does not reveal itself in a denial of one or the other of the above named two principles, for both are acknowledged and accepted by Supra as well as by Infra and by Infra as well as by Supra, and neither wishes to detract from either of these principles. Besides both Infra and Supra admit that both of these principles can be pushed to extremes. The examples of Pelagians and Antinomians are there to prove this, and Supra desires to be Antinomian no more than Infra desires to be Pelagian.

The difference reveals itself in the measure in which more stress is laid either on the one or the other of these principles. The Supra presentation of the truths belonging to the dispensation and the application of grace is throughout of such a nature, that the sovereignty of God is put more strongly on the foreground, and the responsibility of man, though not at all denied, less emphasized that we find this to be the case in our Infralapsarian Confessional Standards. The presentation of the truths belonging to the impartation of salvation is characterized by a tendency to present them as of such a nature, that the manner of imparting them approaches an impartation to man as a passive object, without requiring any activity of faith on his part.

Thus Supra:

a) Presents justification as having been accomplished in eternity, and thus as a benefit for which faith can have no significance. The necessity of faith for justification, as a judicial act of God, is eliminated.

b) Presents regeneration as immediate, i. e. not happening by means of the Word. Now it is true that every one of Reformed principles acknowledges that in regeneration man is entirely passive, but this goes a step further as this involves that even for the Holy Spirit the Word cannot serve as a means in working regeneration. The use of a means presupposes some kind of susceptibility on the part of the object. That means in this case susceptibility on the part of the spiritually dead sinner for the power of the Word of God. Even such a susceptibility of the sinner Supra seemingly rather not admits, in order to make the passivity of the object in regeneration all the more absolute.

c) Seeks the saving significance of faith, not in the act of faith, the act of accepting and appropriating the salvation offered in the Gospel, but in the faculty of faith worked in us by regeneration, so that here again action on our part as necessary for salvation is eliminated. In so far as faith can be said to save, it does so according to Supra not as a deed of man to which he was enabled by the Holy Spirit, but as a faculty given by God;

d) Does not lay stress, as a natural result of this conception of regeneration and faith, upon the external call of the Gospel as a free, wellmeant offer of salvation and upon the necessity of appropriating that freely offered salvation, as laying stress upon these things would mean laying stress upon human action;

e) Considers the Covenant of Grace as established, not with men, with the believers and their seed, but with Christ and the elect in Him (as many of Infra principles also do, but which nevertheless lies in the Supra line), and the working of Baptism as consisting in a working of God from heaven, be it before, during, or after Baptism. In this way Covenant and Baptism are presented as means intended to serve God for the execution of His counsel, instead of being means intended to be made use of by us and to serve us for "a strong encouragement," for the strengthening of our faith in a rational manner. Of a "declaring and sealing unto us of the promise of the Gospel," in order to lead us to the appropriation of that promise, nothing is said. Of Covenant and Baptism the elect are merely passive objects.

That such conceptions, even though that is not the intention, foster the unhealthy passivity which is still to be found in some circles, is evident. History proves that the scholastic Theology of the 17th century and thereafter is responsible for the rise, not

only of the religious experimentalism and onesided subjectivism, but also for the sickly, antinomian passiveness of what is called Reformed Pietism (Cf. §§ 322, 436), notwithstanding the emphasis which scholastic Theology laid upon "the practice of piety."

363. **Carefulness Demanded.**—As has been remarked, each of these principles can be pushed to extremes. That this can be done with the principle of man's responsibility is something of which we are as a rule aware; but this can also be done with the principle of the Sovereignty of God. Making an end to all admonitions with the remark: if I am of the elect, I shall certainly be saved, etc., as is sometimes heard among us, is without doubt proceeding logically from the principle of the Sovereignty of God, but it is at the same time a proof of the fact that thereby one can arrive at the same errors at which Pantheism arrives (Cf. §129.)

To go too far with one principle is to go not far enough with the other. And here it requires no proof for us that one may not go far enough in maintaining the Sovereingty of God, but it is a question if we are sufficiently convinced that to go not far enough is as well possible in regard to the principle of the responsibility of man, and if we dare lay as much emphasis thereon as do the Scriptures. Scriptures do not hesitate to come to man again and again with God's ordinances and demands, and to make his eternal weal or woe dependent upon his belief or unbelief, his obedience or disobedience. They declare very positively that, if a man desires to see God's salvation, he must "order his way aright," Ps. 50:23; that if he desires to be saved, he must pray and seek, must believe and repent, must strive to enter in. To those who do not believe they announce that they will receive the severer condemnation, 1 Chron. 28:9; Prov. 1:24-27; Matt. 7:7, 8; Mark 16:16; John 15:22; and other places. God's treatment of man in Scripture is not a treatment as with a passive object, but ever as with a person, a "secondary cause," a reasonable responsible being, a "free, rational, moral agent," as Hodge puts it. And such even to the extent that He complains if the labor which He has bestowed upon man is unfruitful, Isaiah 5:4, complains because of man's unwillingness and obstinacy, Isaiah 43:24, Romans 9:19.

They are two principles which seem to be mutually exclusive, but Scriptures maintain both, and that very positively. And if we wish to apply these principles, then most certainly the greatest care is demanded, in order that we may be protected from erring in either direction.

1 Chron. 28:9, If thou seek Him, He shall be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.

Prov. 1:24-27, Because I (Wisdom) have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man hath regarded; but ye set

at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh in the day of your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.

Matt. 7:7, 8, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Mark 16:15, 16, And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.

John 15:22, If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

Is. 5:4, What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

Is. 43:24, Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast burdened me with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

Rom. 9:19, Thou wilt then say unto me: Why doth He still find fault? For who withstandeth His will?

364. **How to be Safe.**—But the Lord has certainly given us in His Word the necessary light to travel safely in this way, and we will go safely if, conscious of the danger of erring to the right or the left, we pay careful heed to that light, and permit ourselves to be guided by it. And that not in such a way that we think we have enough in the general principles as they are given in the Scriptures, and that on the basis of these general principles we can confidently reason our own way and draw our own conclusions, for this is not safe. On the contrary, this is exactly the way which leads to danger. When coming into contact with points which seem to be at variance with each other, our logic would inevitably lead us on the wrong track. But in such a way that we do the one without neglecting the other, that we consider the special statements of Scripture in the light of the general principles of Scriptural analogy, and on the other hand heed the special statement, in order to see how far we can proceed in each particular case in following the line of the general principles, in this case especially those of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

365. **The Order of Salvation.**—With respect to the application of grace we are accustomed to speak of an "order of salvation," and thereby we mean: the way according to which we are made to participate in the benefits of redemption, for this occurs in the way of:

1. Calling.
2. Regeneration.
3. Conversion.
4. Faith.
5. Justification.
6. Sanctification.

And these are the parts to be treated in this division of the Doctrine of Faith.

In this connection mention could also be made of the Glorification, to which belong: the Resurrection, the final Judgment and Life Eternal. These benefits, however, are not applied in this life but at the time of the second coming of Christ, and for this reason they are treated in connection with the Doctrine of the Consummation of the world.

366. **These Benefits not of the Same Nature.**—The benefits of the order of Salvation differ as to their nature, according to our various needs. Sin has brought upon us a double misery. It has ruined us both as to our state and as to our condition. It has made us guilty with respect to our state, and depraved with respect to our condition. By making us guilty it has made us objects of God's wrath and of His righteous judgment; and by making us depraved it has plunged us into death. Hence it is that our deliverance must consist in being made participants in two kinds of benefits: benefits which concern our state, which bring to us reconciliation with God and restoration to His favor; and benefits which concern our condition and which bring to us again life and holiness, which restore the image of God in us.

Justification is a benefit of the first type. It is not a benefit which brings about a change in our condition or in our inner disposition, but a benefit which brings about a change in our state, since through it we receive acquittal from our guilt and restoration in God's favor. For this reason it is called a judicial benefit. And of this benefit the Holy Spirit is not the Author, but God the Father, as Representative of the entire Divine Being.

The internal call, regeneration, conversion, faith, and sanctification, on the other hand, are benefits which concern our condition, our internal and external disposition, whereby we are in principle freed from our depravity and have the image of God restored in us. These benefits are therefore called ethical benefits, and the Holy Spirit is the Author of them.

1. The Calling

367. **An External and An Internal Call.**—The Call is distinguished as an external and an internal call, and this distinction is not arbitrary, but founded on the Scriptures, or rather, it is the Holy Scripture itself that makes this distinction, For sometimes, as in Matt. 22:14, it makes use of the word "call" in a general sense, in the sense in which sinners are called, admonished, and invited in the Gospel to be saved, and this is what we call the external call. But sometimes also, as in Romans 8:30, this word

is used in a special sense, in a sense in which it can only concern the elect and includes the participation in spiritual benefits, and this is what we call the internal call.

Matt. 22:14, For many are called, but few are chosen.
Romans 8:30, And whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

368. **What is Meant by the External Call.**—The external call is a well-meant invitation from God to sinners to receive a portion in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, Luke 14:17, to be saved, Is. 45:22, to come and drink of the water of life freely, Rev. 22:17; Is. 55:1 (Cf. § 316, ff.)

Such a gracious invitation from God naturally obligates the sinner to accept it believingly and to act upon it obediently. He who does not do so is disobedient, John 3:36b, and brings the wrath of God upon himself, Luke 14:21.

But to each one who accepts it believingly and acts upon it obediently is given the express assurance that he will be saved, Mark 16:15; Acts 16:31.

This call therefore comes to the sinner with an offer of grace, a command of faith, and an assurance that whoever believes shall be saved (Cf. § 317).

Luke 14:17, And he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.
Is. 45:22, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.
Rev. 22:17b, And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take of the water of life freely.
John 3:36, He that believeth on the Son, hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.
Luke 14:21a, And the servant came and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house became angry.
Mark 16:15, 16, And He said unto them: Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.
Acts 16:31, And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.

369. **Who Are Called Externally.**—The external call is destined for all ends of the earth, Isaiah 45:22; and the Lord has commanded the Church to bring it to all creation, Mark 16:15. This command, however, has not been entirely executed, so that only those can be said to be called externally to whom the Gospel has come. Those to whom the Gospel came, are all called, without exception.

Further, that which is said in § 316-323 concerning the Gospel as a means of grace is true also with respect to the external call.

370. **What is Meant by the Internal Call.**—This external call becomes internal or efficacious when it is accompanied with the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit whereby the heart is opened for the external call through the Word, and it is taken to heart, believed and obeyed, as we find in Acts 16:14 in connection with the conversion of Lydia. Only the elect are called in this manner, Rom. 8:30.

> Acts 16:14, And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.

371. **Difference between the External Call and the Internal Call.**—There is an important difference between the external call and the internal call. This difference, however, is not to be sought in the content, as if that of the internal call were richer and fuller than that of the external call; for the content of both is the Gospel message, the rich and full offer of grace, Christ with all His benefits and treasures. Nor is the difference to be sought in well-meaningness, as if the internal call were well-meant and the external call not; for the external call, as a divine call, is most certainly well-meant, Ezek. 33:11; 2 Cor. 5:20.

But there is difference in these respects, that the external call comes to all who hear the Gospel, and the internal call only to the elect; that the first takes place through the Word, and the latter through Word and Spirit; and that the first is not saving, not sufficient to cause the sinner to come and take, and the latter is.

> Ezek. 33:11, Say unto them, As I live, saith Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!
>
> 2 Cor. 5:20, We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.

372. **Internal Call and Regeneration.**—In the epistles of Paul "call" is always meant in the sense of the internal call, and in a broad sense, as a benefit of grace which includes the entire internal renewing in as far as that takes place in this life, not only that of the regeneration but also that of sanctification. Hence it is that in Romans 8:30 only justification and glorification are mentioned as the other benefits that are necessary to our complete deliverance.

Our old theologians as a rule regarded the internal call as the same as regeneration, and gave the same description of both.

At present a distinction is made between the two, but not the same distinction. Some regard the internal call as an act of the Holy Spirit, whereby regeneration is brought about, as "the im-

planting of the Word," from which "as of incorruptible seed, 1 Peter 1:23, the new life appears." Others hold that the internal call can only follow regeneration, since otherwise there would be no ear to hear, nor a heart to understand. They, therefore, regard the internal call as that act of the Holy Spirit whereby the still slumbering new life of the person regenerated years before is awakened and reveals itself (Cf. § 388).

2. Regeneration

373. **This Word Used in a Twofold Sense.**—Regeneration is spoken of in a twofold sense: in a narrower and a broader sense.

By regeneration in the narrower sense is meant: the first implanting of the new life. The first result of sin was death, which included all misery. By sin man separated himself from God, from the Source of all life, and the result must be death, as certainly as a branch severed from the tree must die. The first thing therefore that man needs subjectively is again to receive life. With this his redemption, as far as his condition is concerned, must begin. And this is what is called regeneration in the narrower sense.

By the regeneration in a broader sense is meant: the first manifestation of the new life. And again in this case with a view to the use of the word we could speak of a narrower and broader sense, for sometimes it is meant as the first manifestation of the new life, i. e. that which we are accustomed to call conversion; and sometimes it is taken to mean: the complete moral renewing of man, including not only the conversion, but also the sanctification and even the glorification.

A special use of the word is made in Matt. 19:28, where it is taken in the sense of the re-establishment of all things.

> John 11:25, Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live.
>
> Matt. 19:28, And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

374. **The Reformers' Conception of Regeneration.**—During the period of the reformation the differentiation of regeneration in a narrower and in a wider sense was unknown. The Reformers considered regeneration to be the act of grace which later was called regeneration in a wider sense. Calvin speaks of regeneration as being the same as conversion, and as being accomplished by faith (Institution, III, 3, 1). Our Confession describes regeneration with these words:

> We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin (Art. 24).

Now when regeneration is presented as the fruit of faith, it is evident that not the first implanting of new life can be meant, not even as included therein. The fruit of faith cannot precede faith itself, and where there is no spiritual life faith is impossible. A regeneration that is through faith can only be regeneration in a wider sense.

This conception of the Reformation period is in accordance with Scripture. The word regeneration or the equivalent of it occurs, besides in Matt. 19:28, only six times, viz. in John 3:3 ("born anew") and 5 ("born of water and the Spirit"); Tit. 3:5 ("the washing of regeneration"); 1 Pet. 1:3 ("begat us again") and 23 ("having been begotten again"); and James 1:18 ("He begat us," "He brought us forth"). In every one of these instances that which is said of regeneration refers to regeneration in a wider sense. In John 3 it is regeneration that enables to see and to enter the Kingdom of God; in Tit. 3:5 it is regeneration by which living in sin comes to an end; in 1 Pet. 1 it is regeneration unto a living hope, the regeneration of those who have purified their souls in the obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren; and in James 1:18 it is called a being "brought forth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." Always therefore an act of grace through which a man appears and becomes manifest as a new man.

375. **Subsequent Conception of Regeneration.**—After the Reformation period regeneration began to be conceived of as including the first implanting of new life. This seems already to be the meaning of the Canons of Dordrecht, which were made some fifty years lated than the Confession. There we find what is accomplished "by the efficacy of the regenerating Spirit" expressed in these words:

> He opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions (III & IV, 11-13).

Once on this track, Theology went further and soon regeneration was limited to the first implanting of new life, while for regeneration in the wider sense other terms came into use (f. i. renewal). "This view has gained the upperhand to such an extent that at present there is hardly any one who, when the word regen-

eration is used, thinks of the wider sense; to use the word in the narrower sense became common usage. By limiting the meaning to the implanting of spiritual life, Theology takes the word in a sense more restricted than that which is generally attached to it in Scripture" (Bavinck). Moreover, this implanting of new life is considered as an act of saving grace, such as can be worked only in the elect, so that the new life imparted by it cannot again be lost.

It may be the question, however, whether the older conception of the Reformation period, which closely followed Scriptural usage, is not to be preferred to the later one. The identification of regeneration and the first implanting of spiritual life, so that to the first implanting of new life was ascribed the significance of being an act of saving grace, seems to have been a source of confusion in regard to that which is implied to Covenant membership concerning the spiritual condition of Covenant members (Cf. §248). Speaking of the children of believers as such Calvin makes the statement that "through the working of the Holy Spirit the seed of the gifts of conversion and faith are already present in them," without limiting this to the elect (Institution, IV, 16, 20). That spiritual life as such cannot be lost, is asserting too much. Adam and Eve have lost it through sin. Scripture speaks of branches of the olive tree, having become partakers of its root and fatness, broken off, Rom. 11:17-21. There certainly is spiritual life that cannot be lost, but the ground for that does not lie in the nature of that life itself, but in the will of God according to His eternal counsel. Scripture always presents the certainty of salvation as matter of faith. There must be spiritual life before faith; not that life, however, but faith has the assurance of salvation. Moreover, Scripture even speaks of a special gift of grace, called "sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise," and that as a gift bestowed on them that have believed, Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22. This sealing would be of little importance if already the first implanting of spiritual life amounted to the same thing. The fact that this first implanting of new life has been so considered explains why this gift of sealing has since found so little consideration. Formerly it was expressly enumerated as one of the benefits of the order of salvation, but in later times it is no longer mentioned as such.

2 Cor. 1:22, Who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Eph. 1:13, In Whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in Whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Eph. 4:30, And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.

376. **Not a Creation of an Entirely New Person.** — Anabaptism and false mysticism taught that through regeneration an entirely new man was created, an entirely new personality beside the old. The old man, the old intellect, the old will, and the old inclinations, these are all left unchanged; regeneration has no influence upon them. But next to this old personality and separated from it through regeneration a new personality was created with a new intellect, a new will, and new inclinations. Thus a believer was spoken of as a "dual personality," and regeneration was preferably called "a new birth." The Antinomians made use of this doctrine to ascribe all their sins to the old personality, from whom no fruit was to be expected for eternity. For the old man had to die, and in its destruction it took the sins with it. The new man was concerned neither with the sins nor with their results.

Scripture, however, teaches that it is exactly the old man which is regenerated. It knows nothing of a "dual personality" in the sense of the Antinomians. In Romans 7:15 ff. the "I" that wills is the same as the "I" that nevertheless does not do; it is the same Paul who with the mind serves the Law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin. In 1 Cor. 6:10-12 those who are now washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God, are the same persons who were formerly fornicators, idolators, thieves, drunkards.

Regeneration, therefore, does the opposite of that which sin has done. Sin has annihilated nothing in man that belonged to his essence, but has deprived all of that of the image of God, has made it all depraved, has brought death upon it. And now regeneration adds nothing new to it, but it gives life to that which was dead through sin, and holiness to that which was depraved through sin. Thus it eventually restores according to the image of God that which had lost this image through sin.

When, therefore, Scripture uses the expressions "old man" and "new man," Eph. 4:22-24, it means, by the term "old man," the depravity which still clings to the believer because his renewing is still not complete, and with "new man" it means the renewing and holiness which have been imparted to him.

Rom. 7:15, For that which I do I know not; for not what I would that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do.

1 Cor. 6:11, And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

Eph. 4:22-24, That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

377. **Whether Regeneration is a Momentary Act.**—Regeneration is generally presented as a momentary act. This, of course, is a result of the later conception of regeneration, and in regard to the implanting of new life it must be true. The transition from death to life cannot but be momentary. There cannot be a condition of being neither alive nor dead, neither in Christ nor without Him, but between the two. But according to the original conception of regeneration, held by the Reformers, it is not true. Then regeneration has its course of development.

In connection with the later conception it has also been denied that regeneration is or can be preceded by what the old Reformed Theologians called "preparatory grace," and in regard to the first implanting of new life much can be said to substantiate this denial. Such arguments, however, do not hold against the conception of regeneration as the appearance and manifestation of the new life. The Arminians spoke of preparatory grace as a grace by which man could prepare himself for receiving regeneration, and in that sense the Reformed theologians would have none of it. But they did acknowledge preparatory grace as a preparatory activity of the Holy Spirit, whereby at the regeneration something happens which is similar to that which happened at creation when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep, Gen. 1:2. Dr. Bavinck points to examples such as the desire of Zacchaeus to see Christ, etc., and then says that in conception and birth, family and generation, education and instruction, disasters and blessings, preaching of law and Gospel, in short in the entire preceding course of life preparatory grace has been at work, toward the regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and toward the place which the believer will later occupy in the Church.

378. **Whether or not a person when he is being regenerated is conscious of the fact.**—It seems that when so great a change is wrought in a person, when he transferred from death into life and made a new man, a member of the body of Christ, that he must experience the sensation of it and become conscious of the fact. Pietists, Methodists, Labadists, Mysticists were and are of that opinion, and for that reason they doubted the truthfulness of a man's conversion, if he could not name day and hour of his regeneration. The words of the Lord Jesus in John 3:8, however, teach that the working of the Spirit in regeneration is known only through its symptoms, so that we can know whether we are regenerated, not when and how it happens.

Regeneration in a broader sense does occur in our consciousness, although one but gradually learns to know and value its marks as those of a genuine regeneration, at least as a rule.

John 3:8, The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

379. **The Necessity of Regeneration and Predestination.**—The necessity of regeneration, i. e. not of a moral improvement only, but of a total renewing by the recreating grace of the Holy Spirit, follows from the total depravity of human nature (Cf. §104 c). Both these truths support each other, and stand or fall together. And they both support and stand or fall with the doctrine of Predestination. For both from our total depravity and from the necessity of regeneration it follows that without Predestination no one can be saved.

380. **Regeneration and Ingraftment into Christ.**—There is a most close connection between regeneration both in the narrower and in the broader sense on the one hand, and the ingraftment into Christ on the other. Separation from God brought death, and to receive life again can be possible only through reunion with God in Christ. This reunion with Christ is brought about through being ingrafted into Christ. Moreover, we must have part in the Person of Christ in order to have part in His benefits. This is what the Lord taught by declaring: I am the bread of life, John 6:35, I am the resurrection and the life, John 11:25, etc., for with such sayings He taught that His benefits were inseparable from His Person, and cannot become ours unless He Himself becomes ours, i.e. unless we become ingrafted in Him, united with Him, Rom. 6:5, members of His body, Eph. 5:30. This is what is called the mystical union with Christ, which the Scriptures emphasize very much, John 6:33; 15:1-7; Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17, etc. "To be in Christ" is repeatedly mentioned as the ground for having part in His benefits.

381. **Differentiation in Regard to Unity with Christ.**—To be "in Christ" can have a different meaning. It may be said that even common grace presupposes a certain general relation to Christ, since without some relation to Christ also the benefits of common grace and common grace itself would be impossible, for the reason that the earth has been cursed on account of sin. "Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:19, 20 contain the deep conception that all things are related to Christ as Mediator of reconciliation, God has through Christ reconciled all things unto Himself, that He might gather together in one all things in Christ" (Bavinck). Of an altogether different nature is the relation to Christ in the realm of grace, but that relation is not in all cases the same.

There is:

a) A being in Christ in virtue of the election, thus from eternity. In Eph. 1:4 it is stated of the believers, that they have been chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world. This being chosen in Christ implies a union with Him in the eternal counsel of God. It was in virtue of this being one with Christ, that the believers were and could be foreordained to salvation, and that Christ could be accepted as their Surety to suffer and die for them. For no Substitute could be agreeable to divine justice unless His suffering and death would be for those who were one with Him (Cf. §212). Furthermore this union with Christ is the judicial ground for the implanting of new life while they are actually still without Christ. This union with Christ in virtue of election is therefore of the greatest judicial significance, but it does not affect their actual condition. Before the exercise of saving faith are they who have been elected in Christ still "by nature children of wrath, even as the rest," Eph. 2:3, still "separated from Christ," Eph. 2:12, and not actually justified.

b) A being in Christ in virtue of the Covenant of Grace. That each Covenant member is one ingrafted in Christ, is evident from the meaning of the formula of Baptism, Matt. 28:19, the meaning of being baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Cf. §330). It is evident also from different passages of Scripture, such as John 15:2, 6; Rom. 11:17. And the confession of this truth by the Church is implied in the Thanksgiving of the Baptismal Form, in which for each child after Baptism the prayer is laid upon the lips of the congregation of believers that "these baptized children may increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ." For such a prayer there would be no place if they were not ingrafted in Christ as branches of the True Vine. Besides, it is evident that there cannot be a gracious covenant relation to the Triune God without a relation to Christ, that there cannot be a covenant membership without being a member of the body of Christ. The covenant relation must therefore include — with the granting of salvation in the sense of making the Covenant members "heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant" — an implanting of spiritual life (Cf. §248), as a gift which does not insure salvation in itself, John 15:2, but in the way of "abiding in Him," John 15:4; 8:31, 32.

c) A being in Christ through faith. This is to be united with Christ in the actual and absolutely saving sense. It is the union which the Church confesses in the Catechism as a being "ingrafted into Christ by a true faith," Qu. 20, or a being "implanted into Christ by a true faith," Qu. 64, and that as a being in Christ which insures salvation, Qu. 20, and the bringing forth of fruits

of thankfulness, Qu. 64. It is by faith, as Scripture assures over and over again, that we are saved, Eph. 2:8; it makes us partakers of all the merits and benefits of Christ, John 11:25, 26. This, faith can only do by making us partakers of Christ Himself, by uniting us with Him in the full and actual sense. This faith that saves is the act of faith, the eating of His flesh, the drinking of His blood, John 6:53, the simple act of accepting and appropriating the Christ who is freely offered in the Gospel, John 1:11, 12. By this act of faith we are united with Christ and at the same time justified, Rom. 5:1, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. 1:13. Not that faith is the author of these benefits, it is only the means; a means even that has absolutely nothing in itself by which to effect such wonders of grace, no more than the clay which the Lord Jesus used as a means to heal the man born blind, John 9:6. It is a means only in virtue of the divine good pleasure, which ordained it so that those who believe shall be made the partakers of these benefits, even as in the wilderness it was ordained that those who looked unto the serpent of brass, would live, Num. 21:8.

d) a being in Christ through glorification, the union with Christ which awaits the redeemed people of God in the heavenly mansions. This will be the perfect union, with the full communion of all the fulness that is in Christ; the union that shall no longer be weakened by anything that separates. As long as the believers are still in the sinful flesh, the union with Christ cannot be perfect, but when complete redemption shall be theirs, when they will be glorified after the image of Christ, it will be perfect.

382. **Necessity of the Implanting in Christ through Faith.**— The fact that there is a being in Christ in virtue of election gives rise to the question: What need can there be then for an implanting in Christ through faith? For the being in Christ in virtue of election is certainly an entirely sufficient ground for the application of all the benefits of Christ, justification not excluded. The answer lies in the way it pleases God to deal with man (Cf. §139). If it had pleased Him to lead His elect to salvation as mere passive objects, then, at least as far as we can see, nothing more than to be elected in Christ would be necessary. But such is not God's way. His way is to lead His elect to salvation as persons, such as He made them, created in His image, endowed with freedom of self-determination. For that reason the demand to accept His Covenant, to appropriate the freely offered Christ and His salvation, the demand of faith. For that reason the obtaining of salvation made subject to faith, so that only those who believe and are implanted in Christ by faith have eternal life. Even the right to become children of God is not a matter which the elect have from eternity, but which is given only to "as many as received

Christ, that believe on His name," John 1:12. With young children the case is different; they cannot be considered and treated as persons.

383. **The Implanting in Christ through Faith not something Contradictory.**—An implanting in Christ through faith seems contradictory. It implies the presence of faith before the implanting in Christ, and the question rises: How can that be? Did not the Lord say: Apart from Me ye can do nothing?

For an answer we must call attention to the fact that the implanting in Christ through faith is not the initial implanting in Him. It is preceded by being in Christ in virtue of being elected in Him, and by being in Christ in virtue of the Covenant of Grace. In the relation to Christ in virtue of election lies the judicial ground on which faith can be given; and in the relation to Christ in virtue of the Covenant of Grace, in virtue of having become partakers of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree lies the ethical ground, because of which such faith is possible, since in consequence of it the objects of the implanting in Christ through faith are not apart from Him but already in Him as branches of the True Vine.

The fruit of the implanting in Christ through faith is, that now the organic unity with Christ is fully established, so that they who were already members of the body of Christ henceforth show themselves members in whom the Spirit dwells, that they who were already branches of the True Vine henceforth show themselves fruitful branches, and that they become branches that will never be broken off, never be taken away and cast into the fire.

384. **Whether Regeneration is Mediate or Immediate.**—This also is a point that concerns the difference of conception of regeneration. The Reformers taught that regeneration is mediate, through the Word, for they held that regeneration is through faith, and "belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. 10:17. In our time it has been strongly argued that regeneration is immediate, that it is worked by the Holy Spirit without the Word as a means. The Reformers, however, taught as they did with a view to what is now called the regeneration in a wider sense, and now the word regeneration is generally taken to mean the first implanting of new life. So in regard to regeneration in a wider sense there is no difference of opinion. The question is only whether the implanting of new life is brought about by the Holy Spirit through the Word as a means or without it.

385. **Arguments in Favor of Immediateness.**—The conception of the implanting of new life as immediate does not rest so much

upon definite arguments, but is more the result of the supralapsarian point of view (Cf. §362). Still a few arguments are brought up, viz.:

a) That without having received spiritual life there is no susceptibility for the Word, no possibility to be influenced by it. The Word can only serve as a means where there is an ear to hear and a heart to give heed;

b) That examples as Jeremiah, Jer. 1:5; and John the Baptist, Luke 1:41, prove that spiritual life can be implanted in children even before their birth, at a period of their existence in which they cannot but be absolutely passive objects of this work of grace. This way of working of the Holy Spirit may safely be considered to constitute the rule, all the more since they in whom the new life is implanted in infancy are the many over against the few in whom it happens at an advanced age.

386. **Arguments in Favor of Mediateness.**—It must be admitted that the idea of immediate working of the Holy Spirit in implanting spiritual life commends itself to our reason. We cannot understand how in this work of the Holy Spirit the Word can serve as a means. The same, however, is the case in all instances of mediate working of God. His common works in nature are more wonderful than miracles. The bringing forth of food out of the earth is more wonderful than the raining down of manna from heaven. The following remarks may be made:

a) Concerning the teaching of Scripture:

1) That it is God's usual way in His external works to work mediately, so that there must be decisive reasons to assume that in this case He should work otherwise.

2) That the works of the Spirit in the realm of grace are never works apart from Christ, and for that reason always works in which Christ is glorified, John 16:14. To sever in this instance the work of the Spirit from the Word of Christ is to sever it from Christ Himself.

3) That in Mark 4:26-29 and in Luke 8:15 the word of the Gospel is presented as the seed from which the new man has his origin and springs up. This concerns the new man from the beginning of his existence, very especially that beginning, viz. the first implanting of new life. Whether we can comprehend that or not, here it is expressly stated that the new man originates from the Word.

4) That James 1:18 and 1 Pet. 1:23, 25, which passages explicitly teach that regeneration is through the Word, although they bear upon what is called regeneration in a wider sense, are nevertheless of importance here, as the two are so very intimately related to one another, that respecting the work of the Holy

Spirit what is true in regard to the one, may be considered to be also true in regard to the other.

5) That Paul includes in the word "calling" the whole work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of man, all the ethical benefits of the order of salvation, to which the first implanting of new life certainly belongs, Rom. 8:30. This word "calling" points unmistakably to the Word, and characterizes the whole of that work as mediate, through the Word.

b) Concerning our Confessional Standards:

That in the Canons of Dordrecht the Church confesses the following:

> As the almighty operation of God, whereby He prolongs and supports this our natural existence, does not exclude, but requires the use of means, by which God of His infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert His influence, so also the beforementioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise excludes, or subverts the use of the Gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration, and food of the soul (III & IV, 17).

Here regeneration is evidently considered as including the implanting of new life, for the Gospel is called the seed of regeneration, and regeneration is called in Art. 12 of this chapter "a resurrection from the dead, a making alive." Still, of this regeneration it is stated, that "the supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise exludes, or subverts the use of the Gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration, and food for the soul."

c) Concerning the arguments in favor of immediateness:

1) That they would obtain, if it were true that the Word of God in order to be effective must be understood and comprehended. But this is obviously not true. Over against the Word of God there is no unsusceptibility or incapacity which can render it powerless. The word of the Lord Jesus called Lazarus from the grave, and through the prophesying of Ezekiel the dead bones became living bodies. That the implanting of new life into unborn children is wrought through the Word, cannot be proved, but no more can the contrary be proved. There is no right whatever to assume that it is impossible.

2) That it is true that in regeneration we are passive, but it is also true that "this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks" (Canons of Dordt, III and IV, 16).

387. In the before mentioned Resolutions of Utrecht (Cf. §110) the following was said concerning this matter:

> That the expression "immediate regeneration" can be used in good sense, in so far our Churches have ever confessed as opposed to the Lutheran and Roman Churches that regeneration does not take place

through Word or Sacraments as such, but through an almighty and regenerating working of the Holy Spirit;

That, however, the regenerating working of the Holy Spirit may not in that sense be loosed from the preaching of the Word, as if both were separated from each other; for even though our Confession teaches that we should not doubt the salvation of children dying in infancy although they have not heard the preaching of the Word, and further no expression of opinion is anywhere made concerning the manner in which regeneration takes place in the case of these and other children; nevertheless on the other hand it is certain that the Gospel is a power of God unto salvation for whoever believes, and that in the case of adults the regenerating working of the Holy Spirit accompanies the preaching of the Word, etc.

388. **Dormant Regeneration.**—Since the latter part of the past century the position has been defended that regeneration can remain for years dormant, so that it is possible that a regenerated person lives for years a godless life in publicly serving sin and the world, until by the efficacious call: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee," Eph. 5:14, he is awakened, and his regeneration reveals itself in faith and conversion. This means that a person can have regeneration as an act of special saving grace, which insures salvation, that he can have the faculty of faith and thereby can be actually implanted in Christ in the sense in which it is meant by the Catechism in Questions 20 and 64, and yet serve sin to his heart's content. As an example Paul is referred to, whose testimony concerning himself, that God had "separated him, even from his mother's womb," is taken to mean that he was regenerated from his mother's womb. And as we must suppose that all children of the Covenant are so regenerated, parents and the Church must remain confident of their regeneration, even if they walk contrary to the demands of the Covenant.

Regarding this view it may be observed:

a) That it is in the line of the supralapsarian presentation of the order of salvation, as in all respects governed and limited by election. Only the elect, elect adults and elect children, can be actual Covenant members; only for the elect children Baptism can be a seal; only for the elect is the free, well-meaning offer of the Gospel. On the other hand, the elect are justified from eternity, and accordingly as a rule regenerated from birth. The theory of a dormant regeneration is intended to refute the objection against regeneration from birth derived from instances of persons who were converted in later years, after having lived in sin.

b) That it does not seem to be agreeable to some statements of Scripture and of our Confessional Standards. According to Scripture faith without works is a dead faith. In the Catechism (Qu. 64) the Church confesses that " it is impossible that those,

who are implanted into Christ through a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness." Likewise in the Canons of Dordrecht (III and IV, 12) the Church confesses that " all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner, are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed, is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active."

According to the theory of a dormant regeneration, however, there can be faith without works that is not dead but living, though dormant; there can be a being implanted in Christ through a true faith (the faculty of true faith) without bringing forth fruits of thankfulness; and of the statement of the Canons of Dordrecht also the opposite can be true, viz. that one who is regenerated does not actually believe, is not influenced by God, and does not himself become active.

389. **Practical Objections to these Conceptions.**—Against the doctrine of immediate regeneration the practical objection can be brought, that a deleterious influence threatens to proceed from it. It will tend to carelessness with respect to the use of the means of grace and the demands of the Covenant, if the work of the Holy Spirit can take place just as well in the bar room as under the preaching of the Word. There is then no urgent reason for admonishing the unconverted to attend public worship. It is then entirely correct when some people regard it as useless to educate their children in the teachings and admonitions of the Lord as long as it does not appear that true conversion has been granted them.

And the doctrine of dormant regeneration threatens still more to tend the unconverted to carelessness. Youths who stray from the Covenant to walk according to their own good pleasure, are thereby given a ground for false security. If others, in spite of their sinful life, must suppose that they are regenerated, why should not they themselves suppose so? And then they can feel certain that in its time everything shall come out aright.

3. Conversion

390. **What Is Meant by Conversion.**—In the New Testament there are especially two words used which are, in our Bibles, both translated by conversion and being converted. One (metanoia) indicates an internal change, the changing of moral disposition, as that is brought about through regeneration. The other (epistrophee) indicates a turning back, a turning around, and—in a moral, religious sense — change of the course of life, and hence

is more indicative of the external change in conduct. They also occur in conjunction with one another to indicate the entire change that is necessary, and then they are translated by: repent ye and turn again, Acts 3:19.

The word "conversion" is used in different senses. The Catechism uses it in the sense of "the mortification of the old man and the quickening of the new man" (Qu. 88), i. e. in the sense of the entire spiritual renewing of man. It is also used in the sense of "daily conversion," with a view to the fact that to "turn" in our path, to break with sin, in order to live more and more in accordance with the will of God, is daily necessary. The term genuine conversion is often used to indicate a real conversion as opposed to seeming conversions, conversions "from sin to virtue, conversions which are "the sorrow of the world," 2 Cor. 7:10, and the regret of which, as that of Ezau, Hebrews 12:16, 17, is not a regret concerning sin itself, but merely concerning its results.

Here we mean by conversion: the first external indications of the implanted spiritual life, or, the external change, the turning in conduct, whereby he who formerly wandered away from God, turns in this path and begins to walk toward God.

> 2 Cor. 7:10, For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.
>
> Hebr. 12:16, 17, Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (A. V.).

391. **Whose Work it is.**—Scripture speaks repeatedly of conversion as an act to be performed by man himself, Matt. 11:20; Acts 9:35; 11:21; as an act commanded men by the Gospel and required of them, Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30. To those who are disobedient to this command greater condemnation is announced, Matt. 11:22, 24.

At the same time the Scriptures teach very decidedly, that man by nature is not able to convert himself, Rom. 8:7. When therefore man repents it is through grace given by God, given him not only in the change of his heart, but also in bringing him actually to a change of life. But then it is still man who by the grace of God repents, who is not passive therein, as in regeneration, but active.

> Matt. 11:20, Then He began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not.
>
> Acts 9:35, And all that dwelt in Lydia and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.
>
> Matt. 4:17, From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Acts 17:30, The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent.

Matt. 11:21, 22, Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable to Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you.

392. **The Ground for the Demand of Conversion.**—In spite of the inability of man to convert himself, God has the most perfect right to demand of man that he repent, because He has created man good and in His image, and man has brought himself in this state of impotence through wilfull disobedience. His impotence is his own fault and can therefore not take away from God the right to require of him what is in accordance with what He made him. And it cannot be that man's impotence should give him a right to go on in the path of sin (Cf. Catechism, Qu. 9).

These things, however, do not concern the demand of conversion as we have to deal with it here. They concern that demand as a demand of the Covenant of Works, and here we have to deal with that demand as a demand of the Covenant of Grace, of the Gospel, Jer. 3:14, Mark 1:15. In fact, when we meet with the demand of conversion in Scripture, it is always as the demand of the Covenant of Grace, and as such we have to consider it here.

Jer. 3:14, Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion (A. V.).

Mark 1:14, 15, Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the Gospel.

Regarding the ground for this demand of the Covenant of Grace and of the Gospel, it being also as such a demand which requires of us to do what we of ourselves cannot do, the following remarks may be made:

a) That as a demand of the Covenant of Grace it rests, not on the fact that God created us good and in His image, but on what God graciously has done and does to us in His Covenant and His Gospel, Is. 5:4; Jer. 8:22; Matt. 11:28; Luke 13:6-9; John 15:22; Hebr. 2:3a, etc. In some of these passages it is expressly stated that the Lord expects fruits of them on whom He bestowed the blessings of His Covenant and the Gospel, and that He considers Himself to have the fullest right to expect such fruit, which indicates that these blessings are of such a nature that they actually enable to bring them forth. If this expectation is not fulfilled, the fault lies with him who is disobedient, and he will be dealt with accordingly; the Covenant of Grace and the Gospel will become to him a judgment. And if the judgment of the Cove-

nant of Works is fearful, that of the Covenant of Grace is much more so.

Is. 5:4, What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

Jer. 8:22, Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Matt. 11:28, Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not.

Luke 13:3-9, The Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree.

John 15:22, If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.

Hebrews 2:3a, How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

b) That we must not lose sight of the fact that in the command of conversion, not divine justice, but divine grace is speaking. God calls for conversion in order that He may show mercy, Jer. 3:14, since mercy cannot be shown by Him to the man who continues to walk in the path of sin, but only in the way of conversion. From this it follows that the command of conversion, as a command of grace, a command in order to show mercy, is at the same time an assurance that with the command the grace is given to comply with it. This is the teaching of such healing miracles as that performed on the man with the withered hand, Mark 3:1-5. With the command to stretch forth his withered hand the power was given to do it; otherwise the command would have been mockery. This the man believed, and he did what he could not do; he could do it, and did it. A command to do what we cannot do, without giving the ability to obey it, can be a rightful command of justice, but it cannot be a command of grace. Thus we may say that the sinner who is commanded to repent, through the grace of God given him in the command itself, is able to obey it.

c) That we may neither lose sight of the fact that the command of conversion is not a command of man, nor of the Minister of the Gospel even, but the command of God. If it were a command of man, the sinner might refer for an answer to his spiritual impotency; but can he do that against a command of God? Can there be an impossibility to obey where God commands? It would have been impossible for the dead Lazarus to come forth from the grave if a man had commanded him to do so; but when the Lord Jesus commanded: Lazarus, come forth, the dead Lazarus came forth. Even so, against the command of God, the command of His grace: Repent ye, and believe in the Gospel, no spiritual impotence can be an excuse for disobedience.

To the question, therefore, Why is it that one believes and obeys and another not? the ultimate answer lies in the depths of God's counsel, in election and reprobation, but not in the ability of the

one and the inability of the other. Thus the responsibility remains with the sinner. Our Lord once said in regard to the unbelieving Jews: If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin, John 15:22. The judgment of the disobedient will be, not that they could not, but that they would not, Prov. 1:24-26; Matth. 23:37; Luke 23:27; John 5:40.

The command of faith and repentance to spiritually impotent sinners must be preached explicitly and fearlessly. It is a message of God, and no Minister of the Gospel is faithful to his calling if he does not deliver it. His preaching is not a "declaring of the whole counsel of God," Acts 20:27.

393. **Difference in Conversion.**—There are conversions that are characterized as "legal," and others that are characterized as "evangelical" or as "covenantal" conversions. By the first are meant the conversions of those who, living in sin, were suddenly grasped by the grace of God and turned from their evil way; and by the others are meant the conversions of those who have from their youth walked in obedience to God's Covenant and have been kept from flagrant sin, and who are now converted in a quiet manner. The first is therefore more evident and striking than the latter, and the first is accompanied with a greater consciousness of sin and guilt and more anxiety about perdition than the latter. The first occurs more frequently in times in which, after deep spiritual decline, a spiritual awakening and revival takes place; the latter occurs as a rule in times of regular church life and of faithful and pure preaching of the Word. In Acts 16 we have an instance of each in the conversions of Lydia and the jailer.

394. **The Grounds for this Difference.**—The gifts of grace which are especially active in conversion are knowledge of misery and faith; the first drives one from sin, and the second drives one to Christ. When the knowledge of misery, the insight into one's depraved condition becomes stronger and there is less believing insight into the Gospel, then in such a conversion the Law comes to the foreground its curse fills one with fear, and often there is a legalistic striving to improve oneself with the purpose of making oneself to some extent worthy of the grace of God and, as insight in the nature of the Gospel is lacking, the thought is held that one must through his tears and lamentations move God to pity. But if there is more insight into the Gospel, in the fact that God is waiting to be merciful, in the fact that we do not have to move Him to open for us the door of mercy, but that He stands before the door of our heart and knocks, Rev. 3:20, then there will sooner

be a giving oneself to Christ and a finding of peace in Him, whereby much of this anxiety and fear is spared us. The sooner he who was bitten in the wilderness looked upon the brazen serpent, the less he had to suffer from the deadly poison. His being healed was in that case less striking but no less effective. It is for this reason that former life, education, and instruction are of so great importance in this respect.

> Rev. 3:20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

395. **The Striking Conversion not the Only True Conversion.**—Pietists and Methodists attach little value to a conversion that is not striking, that is not accompanied with much anxiety and fear. There are also among us those who assert that nowadays few are converted, since such sudden and striking conversions are rare, and they do not count the quiet conversions. That, however, conspicuousness and emotional experiences are not a guarantee of a genuine conversion, is evident from temporary faith, which receives the Word with joy, but straightway stumbles when tribulation and persecution arise because of the Word, Matt. 13:20, 21 (Cf. §405), and also from the remorse of Cain and Judas. The first felt his iniquity as "greater than can be forgiven," Gen. 4:13, and the latter, after he had called out "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood," was driven by despair to hang himself. To the deepest mortification and the greatest regret no saving significance is to be attached, save in so far as they drive one to Christ. In itself a knowledge of one's misery does not save one from that misery, nor does it give comfort but rather anxiety and fear, just as a certain knowledge that one has cancer and all the anxiety which this knowledge causes does not cure one. But blessed is that knowledge if it causes him to go to a physician in time.

Not infrequently do believers think that they would have fewer doubts as to their state of grace, if their conversion had been more striking. But this idea is groundless. Experience even teaches that they whose conversion was of the quiet evangelical type, as a rule are more firm in the faith than those whose conversion was characterized by much fear and trembling. They learn from the beginning to build their hope upon a surer foundation; less upon emotions than upon the Word of God.

4. Faith

396. **Fourfold Faith.**—The Holy Scriptures speak of four kinds of faith:

1. Historical faith.
2. Temporary faith.
3. Miraculous faith.
4. Saving faith.

HISTORICAL FAITH

397. **What Is Meant by Historical Faith.**—Historical faith is merely an intellectual assent to the truth revealed to us by God in the Holy Scriptures.

398. **Is a Dead Faith.**—This historical faith is called a dead faith because it exerts no influence upon conduct; it is faith from which no power proceeds, a faith which lacks the works which must necessarily be born of a true faith, James 2:26. He who really believes that he will perish if he dies as he is, as the Scriptures teach, must be concerned about salvation and cannot continue to live in sin. And he who really believes that eternal salvation is to be found in Jesus Christ, will surely seek Him. But the man that has historical faith regards both these points as true, and nevertheless continues to live carelessly, without seeking to escape the one or to receive the other.

> James 2:26, For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

399. **Does not Deserve the Name of Faith.**—This faith, therefore, does not really deserve the name of faith. In natural life it is inconceivable that any one, lying abed at night, and believe a person who calls out to him that his house is afire, should continue to lie peacefully. He who can do this, shows that he does not believe the warning. Still in the spiritual sphere of life there is such a thing, an intellectual assent to the truth of Scripture, which does in no way influence the faculties of the soul. Although it is no faith in the true sense of the word, it has a certain semblance of it and for that reason it is called faith, even in Scripture, John 2:23, 24.

> John 2:23, 24, Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding His signs which He did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men.

400. **In How far Necessary.**—To give intellectual assent to the truth which God has revealed to us is necessary to salvation, for he who does not believe it with the intellect, cannot believe it with his heart. But a mere intellectual assent, as that of historical faith, can have no value for being saved, and will but increase the judgment of him who dies in this faith, Luke 12:47.

Luke 12:47, And that servant, who knew the Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

401. **To What Extent a False Faith.**—Historical faith even becomes a false faith ("false" overagainst saving faith as the "true" faith), if one makes it the ground for his hope for salvation. That this happens is not to be doubted. In James 2:19ff. a warning is sounded against it. People in whose conduct but little true Christianity is to be found, but who are full of zeal for orthodoxy and immediately become contentious when in their opinion anything is detracted from the truth, people who appear to listen to a sermon with no other purpose than to detect heresies—such people give reasons to fear that they belong to this type.

James 2:19, Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe and shudder.

TEMPORARY FAITH

402. **What is Meant by Temporary Faith.**—Temporary faith is a faith which regards the Gospel as true to such a degree that it even accepts it with joy, but without taking to heart its demands and obeying them. The invitation "he that will, let him take the water of life freely" it hears with gladness as a glorious invitation, but it does not come and take that water of life. There is therefore with this temporary faith no appropriation of Christ, no self-surrender to Him, and for that reason this faith does not implant in Christ. It feels satisfied with its joy, but has no "deepness of earth," no "root in itself," Matt. 13:5, 20, 21.

Matt. 13:20, 21, And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth.

403. **Great Appearance of Being Genuine.**—This faith, therefore, does not appear to be dead, but living; there is joy, and therefore happiness, emotion. It is a seed which immediately springs up and shows much promise. Nevertheless it is dead, a faith without works, for it does not perform just that work which is the true work of faith, appropriation of Christ Himself. Its animation makes it the more dangerous and deceitful.

404. **Is Always False.**—This faith is always a false faith, for he who has temporary faith always makes it the ground for his hope for eternity. Of historical faith it can still be said that to a certain extent it is good, but temporary faith is in all respects false.

405. **This an Earnest Warning.**—In this deceitful character of temporary faith there lies an earnest warning for those who desire a striking conversion. The conversion of him who has temporary faith leaves nothing to be desired in this respect, and still it is a conversion which will bring a terrible disappointment, Matt. 7:22, 23.

This should also warn those who attach undue value to emotional life, and who let their hope for salvation depend upon it. Temporary faith characterizes itself by just such emotional experiences as they are longing for, and thus it proves how futile such experiences may be.

Still another warning of temporary faith is that against Methodistical ado that seeks to move to faith by working upon the emotions. Especially young people who place themselves under such influences are easily carried along, for emotions and emotional activities are very attractive and pleasing; but in how many instances faith acquired in that way is nothing but temporary faith is evident from the very large number of "backsliders" after "revivals." That which Scripture teaches us concerning temporary faith should urge us not to expose ourselves to this danger.

406. **Is not always Unmasked.**—When tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, temporary faith stumbles, and then it becomes evident that it was not upright faith. But tribulation and persecution may fail to come, and then temporary faith may maintain itself long. One who has temporary faith may even remain among God's people all his days, and continue to regard himself as one of the first in the Kingdom of God, on the ground of certain very pleasing emotional experiences in the past. It is to be feared of people who hold a form of godliness, and who show no small measure of spiritual pride, that they are among those who have but temporary faith.

MIRACULOUS FAITH

407. **What is Meant by this Faith.**—Miraculous faith is a firm belief whereby a person feels himself assured that a miracle can be performed by him, or that a miracle can be performed on him. The first is called an active, and the second a passive miraculous faith. The first is f. i. spoken of in Matt. 17:20. The second is the faith that the Lord ever demanded of them who wished to be healed by Him. He healed "seeing their faith," Matt. 9:2; He asked the two blind men: Believe ye that I am able to do this? Matt. 9:28; He did not do many mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief, Matt. 13:58. And when He commanded to arise and walk, to stretch forth the withered hand, to go and show one-

self to the priests, etc. this was over a demand to show faith of this kind.

> Matt. 17:20, And He saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

408. **Is a Special Gift of God.**—Such faith occurs when the Lord deems it necessary in the interests of His Kingdom, that miracles take place. At such times this faith is given to whomsoever He pleases; otherwise it does not occur. As a gift of God it cannot be other than a good faith. Through it Prophets and Apostles were enabled to perform miracles in the interests of the Gospel and to the glory of God.

409. **Can, However, Be Made into a False Faith.**—Miraculous faith becomes a false faith, or rather a false ground for the hope of salvation, when a person mistakes it for saving faith, and considers himself one of the redeemed, because he performed miracles. It is not destined for this purpose, and to use it for such purpose is to misuse it. But on the judgment day it will become evident that many have done so, Matt. 7:22.

> Matt. 7:22, Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons ,and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.

SAVING FAITH

410. **What is Meant by Saving Faith.**—Saving faith is the living conviction, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, that the Gospel is true, John 3:33. This is the faith which, as a true faith in the Gospel, accepts the offer of the Gospel, obeys the demands of the Gospel, and puts its trust in the assurance of the Gospel.

According to this description saving faith is essentially the same as faith in the natural sphere of life, and just as simple. In the natural sphere believing is to accept as true that which a person says, and in like manner saving faith is to accept as true that which God says in His Word, especially in the Gospel. The Catechism defines it as to "hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word," especially a hearty confidence in the promise of the Gospel (Qu. 21). Now when we really accept a person's word as true, we will, as a matter of course, confide in it, rely on it, and do what it requires of us. Not to do this, would indicate that we do not believe him. This is true of saving faith also. But these are works of faith, and, although inseparable from true faith, are

not faith itself. Faith as such is to accept a testimony as true, nothing more or less.

This is all very simple. Notwithstanding the fact, however, that saving faith is something so very simple, there are not a few who have but a very obscure idea of faith, and regard it as something mysterious and incomprehensible. This is the sadder since faith is of such great significance for our spiritual wellbeing (Cf. §425).

John 3:33, He that hath received His witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true.

411. **Believing and Seeing.** — In harmony with the above description it is said in Hebr. 11:1 that faith is the conviction (or evidence) of things not seen." The things that exist are either seen or unseen. Those that belong to the realm of the visible, the perceptible, we learn to know by observation through our senses, but the things that belong to the realm of the invisible, the imperceptible we can only know through revelation and faith in that revelation. Our only evidence for these things is faith and we can have no conviction concerning them unless by faith. Seeing and believing, therefore, belong to different spheres and mutually exclude one another. In John 20:29 and 2 Cor. 5:7 seeing and believing are set in opposition to one another. The current expression "seeing is believing" is therefore altogether in conflict with truth and displays ignorance of what faith really is. That which is said in Rom. 8:24 of hope is also true of faith, for when we see a thing to be true, there is no use for any belief that it is true.

John 20:29, Jesus saith unto him: Because thou hadst seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.

2 Cor. 5:7, For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Rom. 8:24, For in hope were we saved; but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopeth for that which he seeth?

412. **Believing and Knowing.**—In ordinary speech "knowing" a thing expresses certainty, whereas "believing" a thing expresses uncertainty. The knowledge of saving faith, however, is described by the Catechism as "a certain (i. e. a sure) knowledge." Both conceptions are correct, each in its own place. Knowledge is obtained either through observation, or through believing a testimony, and we speak of "believing" in regard to the latter, and of "knowing" in regard to the former kind of knowledge. And since we have more confidence in our own observation than in the testimony of others, "believing" has come to express uncertainty, and "knowing" has come to express certainty. So it is in the natural sphere. In the spiritual sphere, however, the knowledge of saving faith is obtained through believing a testimony that is not a testi-

mony of man, but of God, a testimony that is infallible, so that this knowledge is in the fullest scene "a certain knowledge."

413. **The Object of Saving Faith.**—The object of saving faith, or that which must be believed for salvation, is expressed in various ways. John 3:36 speaks of "believing on the Son," and Mark 16:16 of "believing in the Gospel." According to the first passage, therefore, Christ is the object of saving faith, and according to the second it is the Gospel. This, however, is essentially the same. For only by believing the Gospel is it possible to believe in the Son, and no faith in the Gospel is possible without faith in the Son. Hence the two include one another.

In Qu. 21 the Catechism first expresses the object of faith in a broader and then in a narrower sense. First it speaks of holding "for truth all that God has revealed in His Word," and then of "an assured confidence, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits," which in Qu. 66 is called the "promise of the Gospel."

414. **This Faith a Living Faith.**—Saving faith shows itself to be a true and living faith in that it has the proper works. For it is a faith which, holding God's testimony, especially His testimony in the Gospel, as true, accepts and appropriates the deliverance in Christ therein offered freely. It is a faith that, having heard and believed the invitation: He that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely, actually does come and take the water of life. This accepting and appropriating, this coming and taking are works of faith, works which necessarily will be accomplished by it, works through which it is a faith that saves, John 1:12.

415. **The Description of Faith in the Catechism.**—In Qu. 21 the Catechism describes faith as follows:

> "True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Spirit works by the Gospel, in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits."

And in Qu. 19 the Compendium repeats the definition in the following abbreviated form.

> "It is a certain knowledge of God, and of His promises revealed to us in the Gospel, and an hearty confidence that all my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake."

416. **The Conception of Faith presented in this description of**

the Catechism.—The description of faith in the Catechism was and is yet differently explained. In former days there has been much strife concerning the question, whether by the faith that is described here is meant faith in its essence, faith as it must be present in the weakest believer, or faith in advanced state, as it is only present with believers who have the assurance of faith. The way in which this question was answered decided the way in which this description was explained.

From the Catechism itself it is plain that the faith which it has in view is saving faith, as it must be present in the weakest believer. In the foregoing question (Qu. 20) it is stated that only those are saved by Christ, who are ingrafted into Him, and receive all His benefits, by a true faith. Immediately upon this follows the question: What is true faith? (Qu. 21). This question cannot possibly mean therefore any other faith, than that which is absolutely necessary to be saved by Christ. To take it in another sense is to violate the obvious meaning of the Catechism.

417. **The meaning of "given."**—The position, however, that the Catechism has in view the faith which is absolutely necessary to be saved by Christ, seems to conflict with the fact that this faith is described here as "an assured confidence . . . . that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God." If I must have an assured confidence that salvation is freely given to me, does not that mean I must have the assurance of faith? The answer to this question depends on the interpretation of the word "given."

In §246 it has been pointed out that "to give" may mean to put into actual possession, to make participant, but only in the exceptional cases where there is no ability to accept. The usual sense of the word, therefore, is to offer, to present, i. e., to bestow on a person the right to take what is offered, leaving it to him whether he will make use of that right or not. If he does take it, it becomes his; if he does not take it, it remains ours. In regard to the offer of salvation the word is to be taken in its usual sense, as this offer requires acceptance through faith on our part. And this meaning of "to give" corresponds with the distinction made in the Thanksgiving of the Communion Form between the benefit of "hast given us" and the benefit of "being made partaker of such great benefits by faith" as two different acts of grace, both necessary to our salvation. This distinction also indicates that a giving is meant which in itself does not put into full possession.

Hence the expression of Qu. 21: "an assured confidence that everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God" must mean: an assured confidence, not that we have been partakers of it

by faith, but that it is freely given us by God, or an assured confidence in the Gospel, in the offer of salvation.

This, indeed, is saving faith, for it is faith in the Gospel, in the Word of God. It is the faith which is absolutely necessary to salvation, for only those who believe the Gospel will be saved, Mark 16:15, 16. Where this faith is present, the appropriation can not but follow, but here the question is not whether we are assured that we have accepted the offer, but that the offer is freely made, "not only to others, but to us also."

This was the position taken and defended by old theologians such as Comrie, Ouboter, and others, in a contest which was carried on concerning this question in the 18th century.

418. **Other Confessional Writings Concerning this Question.**— In the Compendium the wording of the description of faith is a little different. It says that faith is: "an hearty confidence that all my sins are forgiven me, for Christ's sake." In this description the word "given" does not occur. Instead of "that forgiveness of sins is given me," as in the Catechism, the Compendium uses the words "that all my sins are forgiven me." This, however, does not indicate any difference as to meaning. In Matt. 18:32 the lord of the unmerciful servant says: I forgave thee all that debt. If he had said: I gave or offered you remission of all that debt, the meaning would have been exactly the same. That no more than the offer was meant, is evident from the facts that the servant never became participant of the remission, because he apparently refused to accept it; and that the Lord, because of this refusal, judged to have the right to deliver him to the tormentors, till he should have paid all that was due.

> Matt. 18:32, 34, Then his lord called unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me.
>
> And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due.

The same thing is worded in the same manner in the Thanksgiving of the Baptismal Form in the expression: "We thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ. Here the word "given" is not used either, but here also the meaning is the same. Not all of them of whom this is said, are saved, and as many as grow up must become actual participants of that benefit through faith. Consequently here also the offer of forgiveness must be meant.

And that saving faith is faith in the offer of salvation contained in the promise of the Gospel is very explicitly stated in the second part of the self-examination in the Form for the Administration

of the Lord's Supper. Here self-examination is meant in regard to the question, whether one has saving faith, or, as the Form has it: "whether he doth believe this faithful promise of God, that all his sins are forgiven him, only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ." Saving faith therefore is to believe the faithful promise of God, the promise of the Gospel, that promise as it was signed and sealed unto him already in Baptism.

419. **The Faculty of Faith and the Act of Faith.**—To the well-known distinction between the faculty of faith and the act of faith there can be no objection. As there is to be distinguished between the faculty of seeing and the act of seeing, so there is in the same manner to be distinguished between the faculty of believing and the act of believing. And it is plain that there can be no actual faith without a faculty of faith, and that the two are different. In regard to this distinction, however, a few remarks are to be made:

a) When mention is made of the faculty of faith it must not be understood as if there is such a faculty as a separate faculty, as a special faculty for that purpose, in the same manner as man has special faculties for seeing, hearing, etc. Such a faculty of faith does not exist. The natural man can believe all manner of testimonies belonging to natural life not through a special faculty for believing, but through his faculties of intellect and will. In like manner the regenerated are capable to believe the testimony of God through the regenerated faculties of intellect and will.

b) It is contrary to Scripture to assert that the saving significance of faith lies not in the act of faith, but in the faculty of faith, that it is through the faculty of faith that we are ingrafted into Christ (Catechism, Qu. 20), and that therefore, as in Qu. 20 the faculty of faith is meant, the description of faith in Qu. 21 is a description of faith as faculty. How such a significance can be ascribed to something that has not even an existence of its own, is more than we can comprehend. But apart from that, when the Scriptures speak of believing, accepting, coming, taking, eating, drinking, entering in, etc. as acts through which salvation is gained, they certainly mean works of actual faith. Of old our theologians have spoken of "the saving act of faith."

As a proof for such a theory concerning the faculty of faith the salvation of children dying in infancy has been appealed to. Such children, it is said, must as well as the adult be saved by faith, and as they are incapable to any act of faith, it must be that they are saved through the faculty of faith, as imparted to them in regeneration. There is, however, no ground to think that the demand of faith concerns such children any more than the demand of conversion or repentance (Cf. §382).

420. **The Elements of Faith.**—The object of faith is God's testimony, and to believe this testimony includes that it is: a) known, b) held for truth; c) relied on. Hence it is said that to faith belong: knowledge, assent, and trust.

421. **Knowledge.**—It is self-evident that a testimony cannot be believed without its contents and meaning being known and understood, Rom. 10:14, 17. Only in the measure it is fully and clearly understood, it can be fully and clearly believed. The way of the Holy Spirit to strengthen faith is therefore that of "the more fully declaring and sealing unto us the promise of the Gospel" through Word and Sacraments. The Roman Church, however, denies that knowledge belongs to faith. It holds that it is sufficient for salvation if one can say that he believes what the Church believes, so that the essence of faith is to have an unlimited confidenc in the Church. To know what the Church believes is not necessary. This is called an "implicite" or "blind" faith.

Although it must be admitted that knowledge does not save, and that "dead orthodoxy" is a very serious evil, still the Reformed Church has ever laid emphasis upon knowledge and upon the purity of confession. And in our time there is special reason for so doing because of the widespread notion that expresses itself in the motto "It matters not what one believes, if his conduct is only good." The superficiality of this assertion is at once evident, for every one knows that one's life is governed by that which he believes, whatever that faith may be, and that therefore good conduct is impossible without good faith. Paul persecuted the Church when he verily thought to do God a service thereby. And still, how many sing the same song thoughtlessly, because it fits their indifference concerning knowledge and investigation and purity of principles.

> Rom. 10:14, 17, How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher. . . . . So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.

422. **Assent.**—By assent is meant holding as true God's testimony, the Gospel. Often this element is not mentioned separately, but is regarded as included in knowledge. This is done by the Catechism which speaks of "a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth." Herewith it is declared that the knowledge of saving faith is another than that of historical faith. It is a living knowledge, with power to assent, to hold for truth. In the case of historical faith knowledge and assent are two things; one must first know the testimony, thereafter he can decide if he holds it for truth, and the decision can also be that he does not hold it for

truth. But this is entirely different in the case of saving faith. There the testimony, which is its object, is known as God's testimony, and therefore as a testimony which cannot but be held for truth. It is therefore indeed a knowledge "whereby I hold for truth." Here knowledge and assent are one. Still there is good reason to distinguish between the two, as they are of a different nature. Knowledge pertains to the intellect alone, assent to intellect and will.

423. **Trust.**—The difference between historical faith and saving faith, already noticeable in regard to knowledge and assent, becomes still more evident in regard to trust, since with historical faith this element is altogether lacking. There is with historical faith knowledge, but a dead knowledge, effecting nothing; and there is assent, but this assent too is dead, and the union of the two remains unfruitful. But saving faith is a living faith; everything belonging to it is alive. Knowledge bears assent, and of these two trust is born.

Trusting is relying upon something, depending upon it. It was trusting in the word of the Lord, depending upon it, that caused the one sick of the palsy to arise as soon as the Lord said unto him: Arise, Mark 2:11. Of the same nature is the trust of saving faith. It is dependence upon the truth of the Gospel, so that one gives himself and entrusts himself to Christ, whom the Gospel presents as a mighty and willing Savior, in order to be saved by Him; a trusting in the genuineness, the wellmeaningness of the offer of the Gospel, and in the fact that it is a personal offer, so that to each one personally the right is given to accept and appropriate this offered, this given grace. Trust in this meaning of the Gospel will lead to actual appropriation, and trust in the assurance of the Gospel that whosoever accepts Christ by faith shall have everlasting life, shall lead to the assurance of faith. In many cases, however, considerable time elapses before the Gospel is understood as fully and clearly as is necessary for a conscious appropriation of the Savior and for the assurance of faith.

424. **This Faith Decidedly Saving.**—That this faith really saves is absolutely certain. Scripture assures us of that fact over and over again. So in John 1:12; 3:15, 16, 36; 6:47; 11:25, 26; Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31, and many other places. In Mark 16:16 and John 3:36 it is said with emphasis that being saved or lost is a matter of belief or unbelief. The grave importance of these assurances we may not minimize. It was impossible for God to leave sin go unpunished, because He had once spoken a word (Cf. §183). Not to maintain that word would have been to set at naught His truthfulness, His righteousness, His holiness; it would have been

to cease to be God. Rather than not to maintain that word, He has given His only begotten Son. No less impossible is it for God not to maintain these many words of grace, this abundance of solemn, even sworn assurances. No less would that be a nullifying of His truthfulness, His righteousness, His holiness. All the divine virtues, yea the very existence of God are at stake with the absolute certainty and reliability of the word: "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life." From this point of view we may say that just as impossible as it is that an unbeliever can be saved, so impossible is it that a believer perish.

And yet, how little this truth, which the Lord impresses upon our hearts so tirelessly, lives in the consciousness of the Church; how little emphasis is laid upon it even in the preaching of the Word! Many believers are in regard to their salvation anxious and troubled about many things. To become convinced of their state of grace, they wish to know if they have the experience of this and the knowledge of that, and think little of investigating if they "are in the faith," 2 Cor. 13:5. Notwithstanding the fact that God's Word speaks so much of faith, and attaches to it so great an importance, many fail to realize this importance.

425. **Benefits Attached in the Scriptures to Faith.**—In order that we may become impressed with the great significance of faith, we may draw our attention to the great number of benefits which the Scriptures attach to it. Such benefits are:

1. The receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit, John 7:38; Acts 11:15-17; 19:2; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13.
2. The acceptance as children of God, John 1:12; Gal. 3:26.
3. The remission of sins, Acts 10:43; 26:18.
4. The justification and the reconciliation with God, Rom. 3:25; 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:8, 24; Phil. 3:9.
5. Sanctification, Acts 15:9.
6. Life eternal, John 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 11:25; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 John 5:13.
7. Salvation, Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16; 10:9; Eph. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:5, 9.
8. Christ's dwelling in our hearts, Eph. 3:17.
9. Being in the state of grace, Rom. 11:20; 2 Cor. 1:24.
10. The sealing of our state of grace by the Holy Spirit, Eph. 1:13.
11. Being kept in the state of grace, 1 Peter 1:5.
12. Inheriting the promises, Gal. 3:14, 22; Heb. 6:12.
13. Entering into the rest, Heb. 4:3.
14. The access to God, Rom. 5:2; Eph. 3:12.
15. The righteous shall live by faith, Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Hebrews 10:38.

Even in places which are intended to emphasize the fact that salvation is the work of God, we find the "through faith" added purposely:

> Eph. 2:8, For by grace have ye been saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.
>
> 1 Peter 1:5, Who by the power of God through faith are guarded unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

On the other hand, the Word of God says concerning unbelief that it will be the cause of being lost:

> Mark 16:16, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.
>
> John 3:36, He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.
>
> Heb. 3:18, And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were disobedient. And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

426. **The Author of Faith.**—The worker of faith is the Holy Spirit. No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but through the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:3b. Not only does He through regeneration enable us to believing, but He also works the act of the appropriation of grace, by enlightening our intellect so that we learn to understand the Gospel correctly as a free and wellmeant offer of grace, "not only to others, but to me also," and by influencing our will to accept it thankfully.

427. **The Command to Believe.**—The fact that faith is a gift of God and that it must be worked in us through the Holy Spirit does not take away the obligation from anyone to whom the Gospel comes to believe. The Gospel demands it, and threatens him who does not believe that he shall be condemned, Mark 16:16. There is a command for faith even as there is a command for conversion. Jesus preached: Repent ye, and believe in the Gospel, Mark 1:15. In John 3:36 we find unbelief called "disobedience." He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar. 1 John 5:10. No man has therefore more right to be an unbeliever, than he has to make God a liar.

And from these passages in Scriptures it is evident that this command of faith concerns all to whom the Gospel comes, not excepting the most open sinner. Paul did not hesitate to say to as barbarous a heathen as the jailer: Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house, Acts 16:21. The statement that he who disbelieves shall be condemned, concerns each one who hears the Gospel.

This seems strange to many, and by not a few is such a doctrine suspected, because they think that believing is being convinced

that they possess grace, that they are regenerated, that they have a saving part in Christ. And naturally a command to believe that would be to many who live under the Gospel a command to believe that which was not true. That, however, is not what faith is. The command of faith is a command to believe in the Gospel. That which all, without exception, must believe is the Gospel, that is the glad tidings that God offers to them personally His grace not upon condition of faith and conversion, (Cf. §320), but freely, without money and without price, and with that offer gives them, no matter who they may be, the right, yea binds them to accept and appropriate that grace. Faith and conversion are not conditions for this offer, but conditions for becoming participants therein. Faith makes one to be a possessor of that which is offered. He who believeth has eternal life.

We might repeat here the remarks that have been made in connection with the demand of conversion against the objection that the sinner is unable to comply with it, for these remarks (Cf. §392) are applicable here also. As the demand of conversion so is the demand of faith a demand not of the Covenant of Works, but of the Covenant of Grace, a demand that has for its motive the divine pleasure to save, Jer. 3:14; Ezek. 33:11, and that therefore includes the promise to enable to believe. And as the demand of conversion so is the demand of faith a demand, not of man, but of God, a demand therefore over against which there can be no impotence to obey, and no excuse.

428. **Unbelief Soul-destroying.**—With justice, therefore, do we speak of the soul-destroying power of unbelief. Now that the Lord in the richness of His grace has opened for sinners a way to salvation, all the sin and guilt which we have is no longer the cause of being lost, but unbelief. In the Covenant of Works God in sovereign goodness had opened for man a way to life eternal by attaching that life to obedience. But man was not willing to walk that path; he has despised and rejected it. Now the Lord comes in His boundless grace and offers to man eternal life freely, and for him who despises and rejects this way also there remains no sacrifice. And not only that, but unbelief shall render this inconceivable grace of God into a curse, and make the judgment the more unbearable. How strikingly severe are the words of the loving Savior: He that disbelieves shall be damned!

429. **Strong and Weak Faith.**—Faith is not equally strong in the case of all believers. For this reason we speak of a strong and of a weak faith. A weak faith is the faith of him who has indeed learned to place confidence in the Gospel and therefore to give himself over to Christ, but who does not dare to place so much

reliance upon the Gospel as to believe in his acceptance in grace. Not that it lacks all confidence in that regard, but that it is very weak and uncertain. A strong faith is the faith of him who in certain confidence in the Gospel knows himself saved through the blood of the cross. In our circles weak faith has of old been called a "refuge-taking" faith, and strong faith an "assured" faith. The difference lies in the measure in which one is convinced of his state of grace and shares in the assurance of faith.

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

430. **Saving Faith and the Assurance of Faith.**—Although they are not to be separated from one another, still saving faith and the assurance of faith are to be distinguished from one another. Not seldom we meet with people who apparently are not aware of this difference, and that to their spiritual detriment. They have the idea that to have saving faith means that one can say: I believe that I am a child of God. As long therefore as they do not dare to say that, they consider themselves as having no saving faith.

The difference lies especially in this that saving faith has the Gospel, or Christ, as its object, whereas the assurance of faith has one's own state of grace as its object. The first is belief in the Gospel as the glad tidings of salvation, and in Christ as the able and willing Savior; the last is having for one's self the assurance of being saved for Christ's sake. It is evident that we have here two things. The question: what thinkest thou of the Christ? is an entirely different question from: What do you think of yourself, of your own condition for eternity? Saving faith is expressly necessary for salvation, but the assurance of faith is not. Many even shall seek to enter in but shall not be able. That which these had was indeed not a true assurance of faith, but nevertheless they had an expectation of being saved. And many who lacked the assurance of faith shall enter into salvation.

431. **The True Ground for the Assurance of Faith.**—The true assurance is correctly called the assurance of faith, for to be undeceitful it must be an assurance which faith itself takes from the Gospel, which therefore has the Gospel as its ground.

And the Gospel is designed to serve as ground therefor, since, besides the offer of grace and the command of faith, it also contains the assurance that whoever believes shall be saved. Even without this last element, only as offer of grace, it would offer a firm ground for assurance of faith, because the acceptance of a well meant offer always makes him who accepts it a possessor. If the acceptance does not make one a possessor then the offer was not genuine and trustworthy, but the Gospel is most assuredly

true and trustworthy. That whoever believes the Gospel and accepts Christ shall be saved, is guaranteed by the well-meaningness and the trustworthiness of the offer of grace. But in addition it is expressly stated by God in the Gospel. Thus the Lord made the Gospel to be a firm ground for the assurance of faith. On this ground, therefore, the assurance must rest. All other ground is sinking sand.

432. **How We Must Proceed in our Selfexamination.**—The manner in which we must proceed in our selfexamination is therefore that we place ourselves before the Gospel and test ourselves according to it in the same manner as, in order to learn to know our misery, we must place ourselves before the Law (Cf. §313). The Gospel has a demand and assures salvation to all who comply with this demand. It demands that we accept the grace which it offers freely (Cf. §316). The question is, whether we have complied with this demand. This is what is meant in 2 Cor. 13:5 in the admonition: Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves.

Mostly, however, a different method of selfexamination is followed. It is the way taught by the religious experientialism of Pietism, and bears a supralapsarian stamp in that it proceeds in its investigation from the sovereignty of God. These people place themselves before the question, not whether they have done what the Gospel demands of them, but whether God has done to them what is necessary for their salvation, whether they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. And this must appear from the "marks of grace" (Cf. §433f.).

This seems to be indeed a very commendable and safe way of selfexamination. The truth is, however, that it proceeds from a decidedly erroneous view. Contrary to our Confession that the "grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks" (Canons III & IV, 16), it is assumed that grace is applied to us entirely without us, that in the application of grace we are entirely passive as "senseless stocks and blocks." Then, of course, the right way of selfexamination would be to investigate whether God had done that which must be done by Him and can be done alone by Him. The natural consequence of such views is that no heed is paid to the demand of faith and to the necessity of the appropriation of the grace which is freely offered.

The Gospel, however, teaches us differently, and calls for a different way of selfexamination. It comes to us with a demand and with a promise inseparably joined to that demand. Hence the point of investigation must be whether through God's grace we have learned to do that which according to God's demand we must do, whether we have learned to obey the Gospel, whether we have

learned to believe, and through that faith have fled to Him, have given ourselves to Him, have accepted Him. If we have, then the Scriptures call us saved, tell us that we have eternal life, that we shall never die, John 1:12; 3:16; 11:26; etc. And in this we have an undeceiving, certain ground for the assurance of faith.

433. **"Marks of Grace" and their Significance.**—By "marks of grace" is meant evidences with which the regeneration reveals itself in the case of all believers, and through which the new life can be known. That there are such marks, is certain. A change in a man which, even though it be but an initial one, is still a change, a change which is called a regeneration, and of which it is said: "the old things all passed away; behold, they are become new," 2 Cor. 5:17, cannot remain hidden. It must reveal itself, and in a definite manner, in agreement with its nature. The question is, which are these marks, and what is their significance for faith?

Both questions, however, bring us in the sphere in which false mysticism has by preference moved, and which must be approached with care in order not to fall in its errors.

434. **Which these Marks Are.**—The cardinal error of the false mysticism is its depreciation of the Scriptures. This is also evident in this case. To the question: What are these marks? we may be satisfied with no other answer than an answer which is given us in the Word of God, and therefore we may accept nothing as a mark save that which is pointed out as a mark in the Scriptures. Instead of doing that, false mysticism has always depended upon its own judgment, upon a pretended "inner light." Thus it has accepted as marks all manner of things, even dreams, visions, and similar phenomena, everything being serviceable if it only has a semblance of spirituality. Thus it has collected a list of marks, which ever became longer, and the longer it became, the more it tended to confuse people instead of enlightening them, and even to cause them to build their hope for salvation upon false grounds. For in Hebr. 6:4-6 we find mention of having been "once enlightened" and of having "tasted of the heavenly gift" and of being "made partakers of the Holy Spirit" and of having "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come," and of nevertheless falling away so that it is impossible to be renewed unto repentance, thus of being lost. How much can therefore be experienced which we, if we should depend upon our own judgment, should think it safe and certain to hold for the saving work of the Holy Spirit, and which acording to the Word of God is really not such. Scripture nowhere says: Blessed are those who have

tasted of the heavenly gift, or the power to come, or something of that sort.

The marks which are mentioned in the Scriptures as signs of a true conversion, are not many. Properly they are only these three: 1. Consciousness of our misery so that we abhor and humble ourselves before God, Is. 66:2b; Jer. 3:13a; Luke 18:9-14; 2. Faith in Christ whereby we learn to take refuge in Him, to seek salvation with Him, John 6:37; 3. Desire to serve the Lord, John 10:27; Romans 8:1. These three are mentioned in Qu. 2 of the Catechism as the three things which we must know that we may live and die happily; in the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper they are named as the three parts of selfexamination; and they are the three parts of the doctrine of salvation: misery, deliverance, and thankfulness.

Is. 66:2b, But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word.

Jer. 3:13a, Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against Jehovah thy God.

Luke 18:9-14, The Parable of the Publican who went to his house justified.

John 6:37, All that which the Father giveth unto me shall come unto me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.

John 10:27, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Rom. 8:1, There is therefore now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

435. **Meaning and Use of the Marks.**—With respect of the meaning of the marks we must guard against the errors of the above mentioned experientialist tendency of making the marks the ground for the assurance of faith, instead of the Word of God. It presented its marks as reliable, not in virtue of any testimony of Scripture concerning them, but in virtue of the spiritual character they were considered to bear, i. e. in virtue of human judgment. Such is radically wrong, for our assurance may never rest on another ground than the Word of God.

The Scriptural marks are of such a nature that it would be even impossible to accept them as reliable marks of grace on any other ground than that of Scripture. Among the arbitrary marks of experientialism those rank the highest which seem to excel in a show of spirituality, of a special revelation. But the Scriptural marks do not characterize themselves by any appearance of special spirituality. They are sober and humiliating. They have nothing in them which is adapted to fostering pride, or to cause one to boast because of his special experiences, or to present himself as one with whom the Lord communes especially confidentially, but they are adapted to cause us to be humble and lowly. No one

would think of regarding them as undoubted marks of grace if the Scriptures did not especially point them out as such. They who decide from the presence of these marks that they are in a state of grace, cannot be doing that otherwise than on the ground of the Word of God. Thus the Word of God remains their ground and their assurance is an assurance of faith. They regard themselves as children of God, because they find in themselves such marks as those to which the Word of God attaches salvation.

With respect to the use of these marks it should be remembered that Scriptures lay most emphasis on faith. Because of the decided manner in which Scriptures repeatedly attach salvation to faith, the first question must be: have I faith? have I through faith accepted Christ as my Saviour and given myself to him? And with a view to the fact that there is false faith, the second question must be: Is my faith true faith? With respect to this the other two marks have significance. Saving faith is in itself easily to be distinguished from historical faith, or temporary faith, or the faith of miracles, but we can be the more certain that our faith is true faith, when we see that it takes root in humility of spirit, in a consciousness of our own misery, and that, active in love, it bears fruits of thankfulness, even though they be but the fruits of "a small beginning of this obedience" (Cat. Qu. 114). This is the meaning of the Catechism when it says of good works (the third of the marks mentioned) in Qu. 86 that they must serve the purpose that thereby "every one may be assured in himself of his faith" ("of the sincerity of my faith," Compendium, Qu. 65).

And if then the Holy Spirit enlightens our understanding in order that we may understand and believe the Gospel aright, and in order that we may clearly see the marks of the grace which we possess, then He beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Rom. 8:16.

436. **Causes of Weak Faith.**—The causes for a weak faith, and in that connection of an assurance, which, although not lacking, is also very weak, are of a varied nature.

The cause of weak faith can be a natural one, viz., that of immaturity. Just as a natural child, so also a spiritual child is in the beginning weak and delicate. The life of faith is weak, and the evidences and works of it are weak, and gradually this weakness must take on strength. There must be a growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 3:18, and this growth is promised, Ps. 92:13, and also commanded, 2 Peter 3:18.

> Ps. 92:13, They that are planted in the house of Jehovah; they shall flourish in the house of our God.

2 Peter 3:18a, But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But if a child remains weak and delicate year after year, and does not grow, then there must be other causes for this, unnatural causes; then there must be a disease which prevents growth. And it is the same in the spiritual sphere. Such a weakness is sinful, a weakness that is not to be gratified but rebuked, since it is the result of an opposition to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the person regenerated for his edification and growth.

As such unnatural, sinful causes of weak faith the following are to be mentioned: reprehensible conduct, cleaving to certain secret sins whereby the Holy Spirit is grieved; a sickly desire to live on the emotions, so that one fears as soon as these are lacking; and especially deeply rooted misconceptions of the Gospel.

Some consider the Gospel invitation to come to Christ and be saved as only for the elect. How this causes weak faith, and makes it impossible to come to a firm assurance of faith, has been pointed out in §322. Such people naturally take it for granted that what they need first of all is to know whether they are of the elect, that this must be learned from the presence of marks of grace, as signs of the working of the Spirit in their hearts, and that they are free to accept as marks of grace such as have some reliability in their own estimation, and to explain them in their own way. Thus instead of seeking a ground for their hope in the word of God, they seek it in their own dispositions and experiences, and these valuated according to the subjective standard of their own judgment. They are like a sailor who seeks ground in which to cast his anchor in the bottom of his vessel. In this manner it is impossible to come to a firm assurance of faith. An assurance founded on subjective grounds must fluctuate with these subjective, ever varying conditions. Besides, what is sought is not an assurance of faith, but an assurance of sight, for the marks belong to the things that are visible.

Others are of the opinion that the Lord is scarcely willing to save sinners, at least to save them. He keeps the door of grace more closed than open. Through humiliation and tears they must soften Him and persuade Him to be merciful. They must seek to open the door through continuous knocking. And for them the question ever remains whether they have succeeded. Sometimes there is hope, more frequently there is fear. If they were but as this or that other one, then the Lord would be willing to concern Himself with them.

Still others believe the Gospel partly. They pay no attention to especially the third element of the Gospel, to the assurance that whoever believeth will have eternal life. Jesus said to Martha: I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though

he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die. Believest thou this? John 11:25, 26. To the question: Believest thou this, they can answer with a most hearty "yes," as far as the words are concerned: I am the resurrection and the life; but they pay no heed to the rest, or they draw up their shoulders. There surely is something more that is required than merely believing in Him, they think; for they have become used to the enumeration of a series of marks, and if the minister does not do this, then, in their opinion, the way of salvation which he presents is too easy.

And where one of these misconceptions prevails, there as a rule all three prevail. It is evident that it is then impossible to arrive at certainty, at the assurance of faith.

437. **The Assurance Possible.**—That it is possible to be assured of our state of grace here, is denied by all Pelagians and semi-Pelagians, especially by the Roman Catholics, who teach that remaining in that state depends upon the human will, so that apostasy is always possible. Those of the pietistic tendency think no more favorably of it. They are prejudiced against it. In their opinion assurance is not impossible, but there is so much belonging to it that must be known and experienced, that he who confesses to participate in this assurance is judged by them to be one who passes too lightly over these matters: he is in danger to be judged as being guilty of spiritual pride and as lacking true self-knowledge and self-humiliation before God.

But the Holy Scriptures teach plainly that it is God's will that His people shall already in this life enjoy themselves in and comfort themselves with the heavenly treasures which His eternal love has prepared for them. He has shown this not only by giving in His Word simple and clear directions for obtaining certainty in respect to our state of grace, but also by giving us in addition for this purpose the Holy Spirit, in order that He should bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Romans 8:16, and that we should know the things which are granted us of God, 1 Cor. 2:12. On the possibility of such assurance are founded admonitions as that of Matt. 6:31, 32, and Romans 12:12, and consolations such as that of 2 Cor. 4:17, while Gen. 49:18, Job 19:25, Ps. 73:24, 2 Tim. 1:12, and other passages teach us how believers of the Old and New Testament have shared in this assurance.

In accordance with this the Catechism teaches us that this assurance belongs to the life of faith of the children of God, by laying in its opening question upon our lips the confession: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, etc. In the Canons of Dordrecht (V. 9) we confess that through the perseverance of the

saints "true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance, according to the measure of their faith, that they experience forgiveness of their sins, and will at last inherit eternal life."

This assurance is one of the fruits and comforts of election. It is because of election that there is a perseverance of the saints, and because of the perseverance of the saints it is possible to be assured of our salvation. Parties that deny election, naturally deny also the perseverance of the saints and the possibility of the assurance of faith.

Rom. 8:16, The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.

1 Cor. 2:12, But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given us of God.

Matt. 6:31, 32, Be not therefore anxious, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Rom. 12:12, Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing steadfastly in prayer.

2 Cor. 4:17, For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.

Gen. 49:18, I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah.

Job 19:25a, But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth.

Ps. 73:24, Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

2 Tim. 1:12, For this cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

438. **That We, therefore, Must Strive for this Assurance.**—If it be the will of God that we know the things that are granted us of God, then it follows that we must strive for this assurance, and that it is sinful not to do so. But there are other reasons for doing so. We must strive for this assurance:

1. Because our faith in the Gospel may not be weak, at least may not remain weak. The Gospel of God has a claim to a complete, firm, and unlimited confidence. Weak faith arises from the fact that our faith is alloyed with unbelief, just as the twilight is a mingling of the darkness with the daylight, and all unbelief is sin; it makes God a liar, 1 John 5:10. It is a sad error to hold that just these weak, ever doubting Christians are the most beloved children of God.

2. Because eternity is too important to meet death, without being assured of our salvation. In important earthly matters persons do not rest until they have arrived at the certainty which is to be gained; how much less may we grant ourselves rest, when

our eternal weal or woe is concerned, as long as we do not know that our soul is hidden in Christ.

3. Because this assurance is of such great significance for this life. It is not necessary for salvation, but it is necessary for the welfare of our spiritual life. Only in the measure in which we partake of that assurance is it possible to live comforted, to enjoy ourselves in the things which God has granted, to know ourselves as God's children safe and well cared for in His hand, and to be thankful to God for the wealth of His grace. How beautifully our Catechism speaks of our only comfort in life and death, with all the wealth included therein (Qu. 1), but how little can this be enjoyed by him who lacks this assurance.

1 John 5:10, He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son.

439. **Faith and Emotion.**—With respect to the emotions, we must guard against overestimating them as well as underestimating them.

Where there is true faith there is not always liveliness of emotion. The true believer can experience barren times, Ps. 119:83. But it is no less true that where there is liveliness of emotion, there is not always true faith. Temporary faith shows the contrary. This is also evident from Hebr. 6:4-6. Absence of emotion is therefore not a just reason for doubting the possession of true faith, and no more is the presence of emotion a trustworthy ground for belief in the possession of regeneration.

It is also a harmful error when people can scarcely imagine that under the preaching of the Word or the administration of the Lord's Supper they can have received a blessing if their emotions have not been affected. This mistaken idea is the cause that many a true blessing is minimized, that its fruit is lost, and that, on the other hand, such people at times make themselves glad with emotional experiences that have no real value. Emotion is to be regarded as a fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit only, when it arises from a conscious activity of faith.

Emotional life and emotions of the right type, however, are as well to be desired, as a barren state of mind is to be feared. The latter is proof of a languishing condition of spiritual life, of lacking spiritual welfare.

Ps. 119:83a, For I am become like a wineskin in the smoke.

5. Justification

440. **What Is Meant By Justification.**—Justification is a judicial act of God, wherein He appears as Judge, and on the ground of the

righteousness of Christ, which has become ours through faith, acquits us of guilt and punishment, and gives us right to eternal life.

The word "justification" must therefore not make us think that it is an act whereby we are made just, an act which causes us, who are not just, to become just by imparting righteousness unto us. That would be an ethical act, an act which concerns our conditions and causes a change therein, as the Roman Catholics conceive it, thus confusing it with sanctification. But the Holy Scriptures teach us to regard justification as a declaration that one is just, as a judicial act, therefore, a judicial decision, which concerns not our condition but our state, our relation to that which is right in God's sight, and which brings about a change in that relation. In Rom. 8:33 and other passages "justification" is placed in contra-distinction to "condemn" (to declare guilty), and it is evident that "condemn" signifies a judicial decision, and therefore "justify" must also have the same significance.

Instead, therefore, that justification should make us just, we must first be made just before we can be declared to be just. No civil judge can declare one charged with crime innocent, unless he finds such person innocent. The judge does not make him innocent, but declares that he is innocent, because he is, according to the opinion of the judge, innocent. Thus the Lord can justify no one except he be just; and because he is just, he is declared to be just.

441. **When a Sinner Can Be Said to Be Just.**—We can be said to be just before God when we in our whole being, internally and externally, in heart and conduct, satisfy the demands of the Law of God.

Such a just person is he who is justified not in himself. On the contrary. He is a sinner, a person whose heart is impure, and who has sinned deeply against all the commandments of God. God, Scripture says, justifies the ungodly, Rom. 4:5.

And still he is indeed a just person, viz. in Christ, whose complete righteousness has become his. By participating in that righteousness he has been made righteous, all his sin and impurity has been covered, and he has become a possessor of a perfect obedience to all of God's commands. Now it is "as if he had never had, nor committed any sin; yea, as if he had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for him." He is now truly just, in his entire being, externally and internally, satisfying all the demands of the Law of God, and on this ground he is justified by God.

442. **For this Purpose Christ's Righteousness Must Become Ours.**—Emphasis must be laid on the fact that for this purpose

the righteousness of Christ must become ours, our personal possession. As long as His righteousness has not become ours, our own righteousness, we can no more be declared just on the ground of His merits than any one can be declared to be rich on the basis of the treasures possessed by another. These treasures must first become ours, before we can be called rich; only when the righteousness of Christ is ours, can it serve as the ground for our justification.

443. **How His Righteousness Becomes Ours.**—Of old the answer to this question has been: by giving and accepting; thereby therefore that it is given to us freely by God, and that it is accepted and appropriated by us through faith.

That giving is done by God, by the Father, and is announced to us in the Gospel. We have already given a more detailed discussion of this in §417 and in §316, and refer to these paragraphs, especially in regard to the teaching of the texts mentioned in §316, that in the Gospel Christ Himself and in Him full salvation is offered and given freely to all to whom the glad tidings come. "My Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven," said the Lord to the Jews of Capernaum, and "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven," John 6:32, 51. The invitation of the Gospel is: "And he that is athirst, let him come; he that will, let him take of the water of life freely." That water is therefore given us, and we may come and take it, Rev. 22:17.

The acceptance takes place through faith. He who truly believes the Gospel, will most certainly act upon that invitation; he will come and take. For this reason faith has been called "the hand" or "the instrument" whereby we take the righteousness of Christ. It enables and urges us to appropriate grace.

And that thereby that righteousness most certainly becomes our personal possession is guaranteed by all the declarations of the Word of God, which most decidedly attach salvation to faith (Cf. §§424, 425), as f. i. that of John 1:12.

> John 1:12, But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God; even to them that believe on His name.

444. **What is Given to us on the Ground of that Righteousness.**—The righteousness of Christ, which becomes ours through the giving on God's part and through the acceptance by faith, is both His passive and active obedience.

When the passive obedience of Christ has become our personal possession, we have therein a complete payment for all our guilt to the last farthing, and on that ground we receive in the justification an acquittal from all guilt and punishment.

And when the active obedience of Christ becomes our posses-

sion, we have therein a perfect satisfaction for the demand which is made in the Covenant of Works, and on that ground we receive in justification the right to life eternal.

Hence it is evident that justification as such is not an act of grace, but of justice, an act in which God appears as judge, and judges according to holy justice. Our participation in the righteousness of Christ takes place along the way of pure grace, but when this has become ours, then it is not grace but justice, that, on the ground of His passive obedience, we are acquitted of all guilt and punishment, and, on the ground of His active obedience, receive the right to eternal life.

445. **Justification and the Covenant of Works.**—Justification is an act which is most closely related to the Covenant of Works. The judicial decision of God is really a decision that we have in Christ satisfied the demands of the Covenant of Works. This Covenant demands our death because of our sins, and it demands a perfect obedience as the condition to enter eternal life. And justification is the divine declaration that we have satisfied these demands; that, since in Christ we have died that death and in Him we have that perfect obedience, we are acquitted from guilt and punishment and given the right to eternal life.

446. **Justification and Faith.**—When it is said that we are justified by faith, Rom. 5:1, it is not meant that faith is the author of justification. He who justifies us is God the Father, Rom. 8:33, as representing the entire Divine Being, and as maintainer of the divine justice (Cf. §86d). Nor is it meant that faith should be the ground for justification, as if faith were something so meritorious that we could be declared just on the ground thereof. But with this expression faith is mentioned in contra-distinction to works, as a means for acquiring righteousness, Rom. 3:20, 28. In the Covenant of Works the means thereto would have been works; in the Covenant of Grace faith is the means.

> Rom. 5:1, Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> Rom. 8:33, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.
>
> Rom. 3:20, 28, Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin. . . . . We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

447. **Justification and Sanctification.**—In order to see clearly the difference between justification and sanctification, instead of confusing them as the Roman Catholics do, the following points of difference should be noted; they concern:

1. The Author. The justification is an act of the Father; the sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit.
2. The Character. Justification is a judicial act, which takes place without us in heaven, and which concerns our state, by causing us to pass from a state of guilt to a state of righteousness, but which does not concern our condition, since it brings about no change in our subjective disposition. Sanctification, on the contrary, is an ethical act, which is worked out in us, which does not concern our state, but does bring about a change in our subjective disposition by causing the old man to die and the new man to arise.
3. The Fruit. Justification takes away the guilt of sin, whereas sanctification takes away the pollution of sin.
4. The Time. Justification occurs but once and then completely; sanctification takes place during the entire time from the regeneration until death, and remains imperfect in this life.

448. **Justification and Good Works.** — The Roman Church teaches that good works constitute at least a portion of the ground for justification. The Scriptures plainly teach the contrary, especially in Romans 3. Furthermore, this is in conflict with the Scriptural conception of justification. Our good works, of which the best are imperfect and tainted with sin, can not have the least value for a judicial act of God, in which he appears as judge and decides according to the holy and inviolable law of the Covenant of Works. And further, justification follows immediately upon the appropriating act of faith, John 1:12, so that we cannot speak of good works before the justification.

449. **Objectionable Presentation of Justification.**—Not infrequently coarse presentations are made of justification. It is spoken of as of an earthly judicial process, with a tribunal, accusers, defenders, witnesses, and a long process. Sometimes people imagine themselves, as the saying is, to have "stood in justification" for a number of days, as if theirs were a case of special significance, which had to be treated with special care, or which was especially hard to decide. It is improper to think in such an earthly manner of heavenly and divine things, and we must guard against doing so.

450. **Justification from Eternity.**—In the last half of the 17th century Antinomian sects taught that justification had taken place with reference to all of the elect, according to some at the time of Christ's death on the cross, according to others from eternity. This, then, was the only justification. The justification which the Scriptures attach to faith consisted therefore only in this that a person, who by virtue of the eternal justification was born right-

eous and free from guilt, became conscious of this fact through faith, and at the moment that he believed. In the course of time it was concluded from this view that believers therefore had no sin and could no more make themselves guilty thereof; that with them there could be no place for repentance for sin, nor confession of sin, nor prayer for remission of sin; that even a lawless life could work no detriment to their salvation, etc.

The Reformed Theologians, such as Voetius, attacked this doctrine of justification from eternity, but it was later adopted by Comrie and others, and also in our time it is strongly defended by the Supralapsarians, naturally without the Antinomian conclusions.

As the doctrine is now presented it teaches that justification took place in the Covenant of Redemption (Cf. §111f.). In Rev. 13:8 we read of "names written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (A. V.). Here it is stated that the sacrifice of Christ has been brought from eternity, not that it was decided before the foundation of the world that it would be brought in time, but that it was brought from the foundation of the world. So also it was not merely decided from eternity in respect to the elect, who were regarded as included in that sacrifice, to justify them in time, but they were actually justified in eternity and their names written in the book of life as righteous. When therefore the Scriptures speak of a justification through faith, i. e. of a justification in time, they cannot mean an actual justification, for that has taken place in eternity. What it can mean is only the realization of justification through faith. In this sense Rom. 5:1 f. i. must be interpreted, where it is said: Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The meaning of this passage is: Since through faith we have come to the realization of our justification, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

451. **Arguments Against this View.**—This conception of justification is again the result of the supralapsarian point of view (Cf. §362), and this seems to be regarded as sufficient evidence of its correctness. But this would not prevent supporting it with Scriptural evidence, were such to be found. The only Scriptural proof offered is that of Rev. 13:8.

Those of the infralapsarian side do not deny that there has been from eternity a bond between Christ and the elect, and consequently also an imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect, so that they agree that in a sense a justification from eternity can be spoken of. But against the conclusion that justification through faith is not a real justification, but only a realization of the eternal justification, the following is advanced.

1. That that which has taken place in eternity in God's decree can only acquire full reality through the execution in time. Even though the Scriptures say that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, because Christ then not merely decided to give Himself in time, but actually did give Himself, this does not take away the fact that this being slain of the Lamb became reality in time. And even so, if the elect are, on the ground of Christ's giving Himself, justified from eternity in the Covenant of Redemption, this does not take away the fact that this justification first becomes real in time through faith. For this reason justification through faith must be regarded as an actual acquittal from guilt and punishment, and a giving of the right to eternal life.

Besides, it is a critical question whether the expression "from the foundation of the world" belongs to "the Lamb slain," or, as in chap. 17:8, to "written." Present day exegetes decidedly favor the latter view.

2. That the view of justification by faith as an actual justification is the plain teaching of Scripture. For:

a. When in Rom. 3 justification by faith is placed in contradistinction to justification by works, the contrast cannot be that of a being conscious of justification through faith in contradistinction to a being conscious of justification through works. The error of the Jewish Christians which is here disputed, was not that consciousness of being justified must be gained by works, but that the righteousness, which is necessary to actual justification must be gained by works.

b. The words of Rom. 8:33b-34a, "it is God that justifies; who is he that condemneth?" surely admit of no other meaning of "justify" than of a judicial act of God. But then also no other meaning can be thought of when a few verses before (verse 30) the word is used for a justification which is expressly placed in time. Rom. 8:30 reads as follows:

And whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. Thus we see: a) that with "justified" an act of God is meant, in the same sense as "called" and "glorified" are acts of God;—b) that this act of justification is an act following that of "calling," an act in time therefore;—c) that, while in verse 29 for the acts which took place in eternity the prefix "fore" is used: "foreknew," "foreordained," this prefix is no more used in connection with "justified" than in connection with "called" and "glorified."

c. Before their regeneration and conversion, in spite of what is ascribed to them in God's plan, the elect are called "children of wrath, even as the rest," "separate from Christ," "without God in

the World"; it is said of them that they were "once far off" but now "nigh in the blood of Christ," Eph. 2:3, 12, 13. The meaning is evidently, not that they were this only in their consciousness, but that they were this in reality. In the third verse we read: Among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. It is evident that the first part of this text expresses reality; so then also the last part. In John 3:36 it is said in the same way of those who do not believe, that the wrath of God abides on them.

d. In John 1:12 it is not said nor implied that the believers have from eternity been given the right to become children of God (something which by common agreement belongs to justification), but this right is attached to the acceptance of Christ, and is expressly limited to as many as have actually accepted Him.

In the Resolutions of Utrecht, 1905, it was declared:

> "That all our Churches heartily believe and confess that Christ in the Counsel of Peace has eternally placed Himself as Surety for His people and has taken their guilt upon Himself, just as He afterward through His suffering and death upon Golgotha has actually paid the ransom for us and has reconciled us to God, when we were still enemies; but that it be just as decidedly maintained upon the ground of the Word of God and in agreement with our Doctrinal Standards, that we become partakers in this benefit only through true faith; for which reason the Synod earnestly warns against every position which detracts from either Christ's placing Himself as Surety for His people from eternity, or from the demand of true faith for the sake of being justified at the bar of conscience before God's righteousness."

The original draft did not contain the words "at the bar of conscience." Some prominent members of the Synod wished to have them inserted and made a motion to that effect. Others opposed the insertion, but when an explanation was given which seemed to meet their objections, the latter acquiesced.

6. Sanctification

452. **What is Meant by Sanctification.**—Sanctification is the continuation of the renewing of the believers according to the image of God to the time of their death; it is the continuation as well of that which began at the time of regeneration as of that which began at the time of conversion; thus a continual renewing of the entire man, internally and externally, in heart and in conduct, 1 Thess. 5:23.

> 1 Thess. 5:23, And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

453. **The Author of Sanctification.**—The Author of sanctification is the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6:11, and by His power ours also, Phil. 2:12b, 13. For this reason the distinction is made between an active sanctification, i. e. that in which the believers themselves are active, and a passive sanctification, which consists in being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We are admonished to apply ourselves to the first in 2 Cor. 7:1; the last is meant in 1 Cor. 6:11.

1 Cor. 6:11, And such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the Spirit of God.

Phil. 2:12b, 13, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His own good pleasure.

2 Cor. 7:1, Having therefore these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

454. **Whereby We are Qualified for Active Sanctification.**—The believers are qualified for active sanctification through three benefits:

a. Through regeneration, for this makes of them new creatures, "created in Jesus Christ for good works," Eph. 2:10, delighting "in the law of God after the inward man," Rom. 7:22.

b. Through incorporation in Christ, for thereby they can, as branches in the true vine, receive powers to live, to grow, and to bear fruit, John 15:4, 5. To be in Christ and to abide in Him enables them to bear much fruit, but apart from Him they can do nothing.

c. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for this Spirit is especially sent out into their hearts as the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Sonship, the Spirit which says "Abba, Father," to work in them, who are accepted as children of God, the childlike heart, the childlike disposition, Gal. 4:6.

John 15:4, 5, Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from Me ye can do nothing.

Gal. 4:6, And because ye are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, crying Abba, Father.

455. **Two Sides of Active Sanctification.**—Active sanctification is on the one hand a striving against and fleeing from sin, Eph. 4:22, and on the other hand a doing of good works, Eph. 4:23, 24.

Eph. 4:22, That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit.

Eph. 4:23, 24, And that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

456. **Whether We May Speak of "Good Works."**—In some circles the expression "good works" is under suspicion. Antinomians have spoken of them as "shining sins," which God abhors. But the Holy Scriptures speak of them repeatedly, Eph. 2:10 and other passages, and as works which are good in the eyes of God, so that they please Him, Hebr. 13:16, and He is glorified thereby, Matt. 5:16; John 15:8; Phil. 1:11.

> Eph. 2:10, For we are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.
> Hebr. 13:16, But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
> Matt. 5:16, Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
> John 15:8, Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.
> Phil. 1:11, Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

And this in spite of the fact that Scriptures teach, Is. 64:6, and we confess that "our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin," and also that "even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience" (Catechism, Qu. 62 and 114).

> Is. 64:6, For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment.

For here it holds that the believers are not under the law, but under grace, Rom. 6:14. They no longer move under the law of the Covenant of Works, which judges according to the rule of perfection in which God had created man, and thus declares everything accursed and damnable which is not "absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law" (Cat. Qu. 62), but they dwell under the law of the Covenant of Grace, which judges according to the rule of the grace and talents lent in the application of salvation, and demands of every one according to that which has been given them, Luke 12:48b. For this reason the God of all grace can approve of the imperfect work of believers, Matt. 25:21, can be glorified by it, John 15:8, and can it be for Him even a matter of justice to reward that imperfect and sin-defiled work, Hebr. 6:10, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; Matt. 25:34-40.

> Matt. 25:21, His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
> Luke 12:48b, And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.
> Hebr. 6:10, For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and your love which ye showed towards his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.
> 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course,

I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that have loved his appearing.

Matt. 25:34-40, Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kindom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; and I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.

457. **Which Are "Good Works."**—Good works, says the Catechism, Qu. 91, are only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men.

This description mentions the source (faith), the standard (the Law of God), and the purpose (the glory of God) of good works.

458. **Faith the Source.**—Faith is the source of good works, because faith unites us with Christ (Cf. §381), and causes us to abide in Him, and only by abiding in Him is it possible to receive from Him that which we need to bear good fruits.

Furthermore, in the words: And whatsoever is not of faith is sin, Rom. 14:23b, we are taught still another significance of faith for good works, i. e. that every work, in order to be a good work, requires the conviction that it is according to God's will. If we lack this conviction with regard to any particular work, and still do it, we sin. Thus faith must be the source, both of the power and of the motive for good works.

459. **The Glory of God the Purpose.**—And the glory of God must be our express and conscious purpose, for then only will the good works really be expressions of thankfulness. And this it is that makes the believer a priest, who dedicates his life to God, who presents it as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. According as we have in view the glory of God, our life is in the true sense a serving of God, Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 10:31.

But if this is the measure with which the value of our good works is to be measured, how truly it is then said of all our righteousnesses that they are as a polluted garment! If the Perfectionist had any conception of this, it would be impossible for him to be a Perfectionist. How much reason we have to feel ashamed when we

repeatedly find in the Psalms the expression of a heart so full of need of glorifying God, that it calls the whole creation, even to the sea-monsters and all the deeps, to unite with the Psalmist in praising the Lord, Ps. 103:11.

Rom. 12:1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.

1 Cor. 10:31, Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

460. **The Law of God as Rule.**—"Not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men," says the Catechism. False mysticism wishes to have the law in this case replaced by the "inner light," or special revelations, but that which they wish to substitute is nothing but their own good pleasure, and the result is a service founded on their own imaginations, which cannot be a true service of God. The Roman Church, indeed, recognizes the Law as the rule of conduct, but has in addition a series of human institutions, "commands of the Church," consisting in the repetition of prayers (Paternosters and Ave Marias), the giving of alms to the Church, fasting, self-chastising, pilgrimages, etc. A high place is given the so-called "evangelical counsels," i. e. celibacy, voluntary poverty, and implicit obedience to superiors, to which monks and the clergy bind themselves by solemn promises. Obedience to these counsels has greater value than obedience to the common commands of the Law, for thereby one does more than he is in duty bound to do, and hence to this obedience there is attached the gaining of a higher step of moral perfection, and at the same time also of heavenly felicity. To all such arbitrary service of God applies what the Lord spoke in Matt. 15:3-9, about making void the Word of God and worshipping Him in vain, "teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

We, however, confess: "according to the law," which means that the Law only is the rule of sanctification, for so the Word of God teaches, Is. 8:20; Ps. 119:105. And our fathers were so zealous in adhering to God's ordinances and to them alone, that they even objected to the observance of the Christian feastdays and weekday prayer services. They feared that desiring to do more than that which the Lord had commanded in His Word would result in relaxing with respect to that which He had instituted.

Is. 8:20, To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them.

Ps. 119:105, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.

461. **Whether Conscience can be our Rule of Life.**—In man there is still a certain consciousness of the moral law, of its content, and of the authority which, as a divine law, it has over him,

Rom. 2:15. And there is in him a certain impulse urging him to apply this law to his own acts, and to judge himself by it. This is what we call conscience.

It is an old saying that it is not advisable to go contrary to one's conscience. So it is, unless one is convinced that his conscience is erring. Whatever conscience regards as a command, it regards as a divine command; for our own consciousness therefore to act contrary to our conscience is to act contrary to God's command, i. e. to sin.

From this it does not follow that acting according to one's conscience is always safe, or that the voice of conscience can take the place of the Law as rule of conduct. Not a few are of that opinion, and attribute to conscience such a significance, just as false mysticism attributes such a significance to its "inner light." This, however, is to ascribe to conscience a reliability which it does not have, because the consciousness of the Law of God which it may have, is darkened by sin, and because it is open to and affected by different influences of education, environment, etc. It can be enlightened and purified by regeneration, and sanctification, and knowledge of Scripture, but it is also possible, that it becomes still more darkened and perverted by error and hardening of heart. It can even be seared as with a hot iron, 1 Tim. 4:2. Such a conscience cannot be a trustworthy rule of conduct. A great number of sins are committed without the conscience testifying against them, or which are even approved of by it. Hence even the presence of a conscience in man, no matter how strongly its accusing or excusing can impress him, does not take away the fact that the "according to the Law" must be maintained.

> Rom. 2:15, In that they (i. e. the heathen) show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them.

462. **The Value of Good Works.**—Instead of being insignificant, the good works of the believers have a many sided precious value, which can urge them to be more abundant in such good works. To the question, why we must still do good works? the Catechism answers (Qu. 86): 1. That so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, and that He may be praised by us, John 15:8. 2. Also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof, Matt. 7:17-20. 3. And that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ, 1 Peter 3:1, 2.

> **Matt. 7:17-20, Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.**

1 Pet. 3:1, 2, In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your husbands; that, even if they obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear.

463. **The Reward of Good Works.** — Scripture repeatedly teaches, f. i. in the parable of the Talents, Matt. 25:14-26, that good works will be rewarded, and that with temporal blessings, Matt. 6:33, and even with eternal good, with a greater degree of glory, Matt. 25:21. The giving of this reward is even presented as a matter of God's justice, Hebr. 6:10. On our part, however, this reward cannot be other than a reward of grace. The justice which rewards in this way, is the justice which reigns in the realm of grace (Cf. §75).

In His condescending goodness the Lord gave these promises to urge His people to zeal in good works. Thus they have, with thankful recognition of this goodness, to strive for the promised reward, 1 Cor. 9:24. To regard oneself as above the need of such encouragement to do good works is no piety, but pseudospirituality and self-exaltation.

Matt. 6:33, But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

1 Cor. 9:24, Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain.

464. **Progress and Retrogression in Sanctification.**—As a rule true believers will make progress in sanctification, in mortification of the old man and quickening of the new man. This does not mean that they will gradually become holier in their own estimation, for the opposite is true. Even if earnest self-examination convinces them that there are evidences of progress in the breaking down of sin, in increasing in piety, in strengthening of faith, hope, and love, yet they will ever abhor themselves more and humble themselves before God, because he who really progresses also learns more and more to see his own depravity and to hate sin. It is therefore incorrect to regard an increasing self-abhorrence as a sign of retrogression; it rather proves the contrary.

But there can be a real retrogression in sanctification, a "falling short of the grace of God," Heb. 12:15. In many cases the cause is then to be found in averse conditions and relations, especially in lack or neglect of the means of grace.

465. **No Falling from Grace.**—Retrogression in grace is possible, but there is no falling from grace. The Pelagians teach the possibility of falling from grace, as must necessarily follow from their doctrine of the freedom of the will; whereas our belief in the perseverance of the saints necessarily follows from the doctrine of

election to salvation, as the ground for the application of saving grace, Acts 13:48b, and of the being guarded through faith by the power of God unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1:5. It is on that ground also that what becomes our portion through faith, becomes a possession which can never be lost. He that believes on the Son hath eternal life, John 3:36, and after we have believed, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

It is true that there can occur shocking examples of a falling away on the part of persons who occupied prominent places in the Church, but such instances merely show how much we can be mistaken. Scriptures teach the perseverance of the saints, and that in strong terms, John 10:28; 11:25, 26; Rom. 8:30; 1 Peter 1:5.

> Acts 13:48b, And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.
> Eph. 1:13b, In whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.
> John 10:28, And I will give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.
> Rom. 8:30, And whom He foreordained, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.
> 1 Pet. 1:5, Who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

466. **No Perfection in this Life.**—The Antinomians taught that the believers were perfect already in this life, because they regarded the entire application of salvation as completed with the justification in eternity. They no longer sinned because they were no longer subject to the law, in fact for them there was no law, and therefore no transgression. Those who at present teach that believers can and must be perfect in this life are known as Perfectionists. They, however, mean thereby that the believers can become perfectly holy, so that they really sin no more, do nothing any more that is in conflict with the law of God. They, therefore, do not assert that there no longer is a law for them, but they regard the law very superficially, and thereby alone can they make themselves believe that for such and such a time they have not sinned.

Scriptures teach otherwise. The Word of God presents not one saint who had reached such a stage. Paul, who strove for it so earnestly, had not reached it, Rom. 7:15-26; Phil. 3:12. Concerning believers in general it says: For in many things we all stumble, James 3:2, and, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, 1 John 1:8.

From this it does not follow that the believer may be satisfied with his imperfection. Paul pressed on toward it, and every believer must do the same. The admonition: Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, Matt. 5:48,

concerns all the redeemed. Neglect to use the means given us to develop sanctification (Cf. §454) may be considered to be the main cause of our imperfection, and this is our guilt.

> Phil. 3:12, Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which I was also laid hold on by Christ Jesus.

467. **The Consummation of Sanctification.**—The consummation of sanctification takes place in glorification, i. e. partly in dying, which, with the laying aside of the body, which is dead because of sin, Rom. 8:10, brings deliverance from all sin and pollution and from all connection with the world which lies in wickedness; and partly in the resurrection, when the body is raised in glory, and is united with a glorified soul to be forever perfect in the heavens, freed from all power of death and sin.

> Romans 8:10, And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

THE LAW AS THE RULE OF SANCTIFICATION

468. **The Explanation of the Law.**—To what extent the Reformed Theologians had an eye for the depth and breadth of the Law of God, so that there was no need of "evangelical counsels" in connection therewith, is evident from the rules which they laid down for the explanation of the Law. They are three in number: 1. That in every prohibition there is included a command to do the contrary, and vice versa;—2. That in every prohibition not only the express sins mentioned therein are forbidden, but also all sins related therewith, and that in the case of every command are prescribed not only the duties mentioned therein, but also related duties;—3. That the Law not only concerns external acts, but our internal life as well, of which the external is a revelation. These rules were also kept in mind in the explanation which the Catechism gives of the Ten Commandments, and this explanation we will follow.

469. **The First Commandment.**—The first commandment is a prohibition of all idolatry, and idolatry is not merely the serving of false gods according to the manner of the heathen, but also having anything but God in which we place our trust. For by placing our trust in anything, we make it our god; we make it something which sovereignly controls our destiny and which has it in its power to bring us profit. This first commandment, therefore, bears upon the deepest issues of our life. The rich fool who said unto his soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, Luke 12:19, was an idolater. If we say: Today or tomorrow we will go to this

city, etc., in place of saying, If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that, James 4:13, 15, then we are idolaters. And how full the human heart is of idolatrous trust in himself, in his own strength and talents, of idolatrous trust in men and conditions and circumstances, of idolatrous trust in money and possessions, in power and influence, etc.

Nor is it superfluous, even in our "enlightened" age, to warn, as the Catechism does, against sorcery, soothsaying, and superstition. These things are sins against the first Commandment, because they are satanic imitations of holy matters, viz., of miracles, prophecy, and faith, by which power belonging to God only is ascribed to other real or fancied beings or things. Sorcery is the miracle, soothsaying is the prophecy, and superstition is the faith of the kingdom of darkness, and to concern ourselves therewith, is to make the prince of darkness to be our god. In our "enlightened" age sorcery and soothsaying are not yet disappeared, and superstition is on the increase according as unbelief increases, for the unbelievers have ever been the most superstitious of all. Spiritism lies in the same plane, and all such things are expressly forbidden in Deut. 18:10-12. To this sin belongs also the profane use of the lot, especially in order to secure knowledge of hidden things, games of chance, expecting favor from fortune, chance, fate, etc.

On the other hand it is commanded that we truly acknowledge God as the only, true God, thus as the Sovereign Power, who rules all things and has everything in His power, so that without His will nothing can do unto us good or evil. This includes to give to Him with our whole heart and all our powers the honor, love, and trust and devotion which is due Him as our Creator and Sustainer, as the Highest Good, the source of all good in nature and in grace.

The first commandment is the fundamental commandment, the commandment in which the Lord binds us with all that we are to His service and demands us for Himself; the commandment, therefore, in which the Lord announces His sovereignty, His divine right to prescribe all the succeeding commands, and our duty to obey them. Disobedience to any of the other commandments is at the same time a direct disobedience to the first commandment.

> Deut. 18:10-12, There shall not be found with thee any one that. . . . . useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whosoever does these things is an abomination unto Jehovah; and because of these abominations Jehovah thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

470. The Second Commandment.—The second Commandment forbids image-worship as the most explicit form of serving God

in an arbitrary and sensuous manner, so that it is directed against all worship of that character; and it commands to worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, John 4:24.

Image-worship is at the same time idolatry, when the image is honored as being a god itself or the representation of a false god. In the second Commandment, however, such image-worship is meant, which intends to serve the true God by means of an image as a visible representation of Him. This is what Israel intended with the golden calf, and Jeroboam with his calves of gold at Bethel and Dan. The Roman Catholic practices image-worship when he kneels before an image of Christ, but he practices both image-worship and idolatry when he kneels before an image of Mary.

The Roman Church defends its position by asserting that the Ten Commandments do not forbid the use of images in worshipping God. Following Augustine's division of the Ten Commandments, they unite the second Commandment with the first, so that the second Commandment appears, not as a separate commandment, but only as an elaboration on the first, which forbids only idolatry. In order to retain the number of ten, Exod. 34:28, it was necessary to divide one of the other commandments in two, and this operation was performed on what we call the tenth Commandment. Such a division of the tenth Commandment is so apparently arbitrary and contrary to the contents, that it offers a sufficient refutation of the whole procedure. The Lutherans also follow this division.

Image-worship, then, means to serve God, but in a sensuous manner, by praying to Him as represented by a sensuous, tangible image. Thus, in this Commandment all worship of God in a sensuous manner is forbidden. In obedience to this commandment the Reformed Churches have removed from the church buildings which were allotted to them after the Reformation, all images and paintings and other sensuous elements which were destined for use in worship and to enhance its beauty and solemnity. It was also in obedience to this command that they instituted simple services, so that there would be no danger of arousing sensuous feelings which have no religious value, and to which such value can so easily be attached. Thus the old Reformed Churches not only abolished the beautiful choir music, but did not even wish that the organ should be used to lead in the singing. In this last point we do not agree with them; but let us not forget, that to call in, for the benefit of the service, all manner of sensuous elements, even moving pictures, as is done at present in not a few Churches, is a sign of spiritual and religious anaemia.

That this commandment does not mean to forbid the making of all images, as has sometimes been asserted, is evident from the

presence of images of angels and cherubs in the temple. The commandment concerns the making of images for religious purposes, and all religious use of images.

471. **The Third Commandment.**—The first commandment commands that we worship God only; the second commandment commands that we worship Him in a spiritual manner; and the third commandment commands that we worship Him with respect and devotion, which shall especially reveal itself in such a respect for His name that we never use it disrespectfully or in vain. "To use in vain" signifies using as an empty sound, and "not using in vain" is therefore not using it in any way in which the Name in its full significance does not receive its due.

That which is hereby forbidden includes: all unnecessary use of the Name of God, even though that takes place in the preaching of the Word, in religious conversation, in prayer; all use of that Name in mutilated forms; all misuse of the names of the incommunicable attributes of God (gracious, goodness, almighty); all vain use of words whereby God is meant (Heaven, Heaven knows); all vain use of words in the form of an oath (by Jove, by George); all humorous use of Scriptural language and expressions. From all such thoughtlessness the language of a Christian should be free.

The Catechism especially lays emphasis upon the misuse of the oath, and with reason. It is especially in the oath that the name of God is used with great earnestness. To swear an oath is to place oneself before the throne of God, to give our testimony in His presence, in order that He, who knows the truth, may bear witness to it by signally punishing us if our testimony be false. To do this falsely is most fearful, is the height of impious audacity.

An oath is permitted, says the Catechism, "either when the magistrates demand it of the subjects; or when necessity requires us thereby to confirm fidelity and truth to the glory of God, and the safety of our neighbor." "Such an oath is founded on God's Word, and therefore was justly used by the saints, both in the Old and New Testaments." For the rest, the words of Christ hold: Swear not at all . . . . But let your speech be, Yea, yea; nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than this is of the evil one, Matt. 5:33-37. Christian Ethics demands with respect to the taking of an oath: a. Intellectual capacity on the part of the person to take an oath. He must be in a position to understand and appreciate the earnest significance of the matter. No oath may be taken from one who is intoxicated, from an idiot, or from a minor. b. Moral qualification on the part of the person for taking an oath. There must be no reason for doubting his truthfulness in taking

the oath. No oath may be demanded of an atheist, of an open sinner, of any one who may have great interest in committing perjury. Really only he who fears God can have the moral qualification for taking an oath. c. Worthiness of the cause for taking an oath; it must be sufficiently important for this.

In answer to the question whether sinning against this commandment be so great a sin, the Catechism says the following: It undoubtedly is, for there is no sin greater or more provoking to God, than the profaning of His name; and therefore He has commanded this sin to be punished with death," Lev. 24:16. With justice it is pointed out that there is no sin for which there is less excuse, no sin which reveals greater wicked audacity and enmity against God. The more should we heed the admonition not "by silence or connivance to be partakers of this horrible sin in others," and as far as our own words are concerned to remember that our words also will be remembered in judgment day; of every idle word will we have to give an account, Matt. 12:36. And of which sin will we be less able to explain why we did it than of the sins against this commandment?

Lev. 24:16, And he that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, he shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him.
Matt. 12:36, And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

472. **The Fourth Commandment.**—In the fourth commandment the Lord commands man to keep holy the sabbath which He has instituted. He shall perform no labor which belongs to his regular activity of the six days of the week, but shall rest. Why? Because the Lord desires that man, bearing the image of God, also follow the example of God in this respect. Just as the Lord Himself in the work of creation, after the creative work of six days, rested from His work on the seventh, so man shall devote six days to his labor, but on the seventh day he shall rest and perform no labor.

Nothing more is said in this commandment concerning keeping the sabbath holy. But in the provision that the rest of man shall be an imitation of the rest of God is implied that the character of that rest must also be a reflection of the rest of God. Hence, just as the rest of God did not consist in doing nothing, John 5:17, but in enjoying Himself in His completed work, so also man's rest must not consist in doing nothing, but in being engaged with the works of God, especially with the works of grace for His glory and our salvation. The first fruit of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost was an ideal religious service, one in which all took part, and that which was done was: speaking the mighty works of God.

John 5:17, But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.

A religious service in which all the people would take part on the sabbath was not found under the Old Testament dispensation. But we have such a service and for us it is the chief element of our celebration of the day of rest. The explanation which is given in the Catechism of the fourth commandment is aimed at this point.

In this connection we must note. 1. the service on Sunday. 2. abstinence from labor, and 3. the substitution of Sunday for the sabbath.

1. **The service on Sunday.** With respect to the service on Sunday, says the Catechism, the Lord commands in this commandment:

First, that the ministry of the Gospel and the schools be maintained.

Maintaining the ministry of the Gospel demands that the believers unite in an organized congregation; that they elect elders and deacons and try to secure a minister of the Gospel; that they provide the necessary buildings and for the institution of regular services; and also that they provide that this all be maintained and that every one contributes according to his means.

Furthermore, maintaining the office of the ministry of the Gospel demands that schools be provided for educating men for the ministry, that the support of the pastors be provided for, 1 Cor. 9:13, 14, 1 Tim. 5:17, 18, and that not only as long as they serve, but also when they are incapacitated through old age or weakness, and also the support of their widows and orphans, for since the Church has stipulated that its ministers, "once lawfully called, are bound to the service of the Church for life" (Church Order, Art. 12) and requires of them that they shall devote all their time and energy to its interests, the Church is under the obligation to provide for their support throughout life, and for that of their dependents as long as they need it.

The Catechism also speaks of the maintaining of schools, i. e. of schools for the education of the youth in "reading and writing, in languages and the arts, but also in piety and in the Catechism" (Church Order of Dordrecht, Art. 21), for there must the children be educated so that they may enjoy with fruit the preaching of the Word and derive a blessing therefrom. And thereby the service must continue itself in the generations. But that which in those days was done in the public schools, must now be done in the catechetical classes and in the Christian schools, so that now the phrase "schools be maintained" is applicable to this.

1 Cor. 9:13, 14, Know ye not that they that minister of sacred things eat of the things of the temple, and they that wait upon the altar have

their portion with the altar? Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the Gospel should live of the Gospel.

1 Tim. 5:17, 18, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.

Secondly, that the congregation make faithful use of the church service, "diligently frequenting the Church of God," to be engaged in a threefold manner, viz. a) in hearing the Word of God and partaking of the Sacraments; — b) in calling upon the Lord publicly in prayer; — c) in contributing to the relief of the poor. Thus a threefold service: that of the Word and the Sacraments, that of prayer, and that of mercy. And that primarily to serve the Lord on the day which He has appropriated for Himself. Hence, the principal consideration must not be how well the minister has satisfied us, but how well we have served the Lord on that day.

Thirdly, according to the Catechism, "that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me, and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath." The fourth Commandment, therefore, does not relate to the Sunday only, but to the whole week. It is not so that after having kept that day holy, we have complied with all its requirements. On the contrary. That we on the Sabbath day must follow the divine example, implies that we must do it throughout the whole week, throughout our whole life. The manner, however, in which we have to do it is such, that it does not interfere with obedience to the command: six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work. We have to do it by "cleansing ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. 7:1. Therein rest will be found, and the eternal Sabbath begun in this life.

2. **Abstinence from Labor.**—Israel was strongly commanded to abstain from labor, Exod. 31:14, and this ceasing from labor had then a typical significance. This no longer holds for us in that sense. In this respect also the legal character of the Old Testament has been replaced by freedom. The principal element of this commandment, however, has a moral, and therefore a lasting, significance. And this is that of the seven days we shall take one and dedicate it to the service of God. This demands a ceasing from one's daily tasks, since this would encroach upon the service of the Lord upon that day, and then it would not be a day dedicated to the Lord.

Exod. 31:14, Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Works permitted upon the sabbath were, besides those belonging to the service, Matt. 12:6; John 7:22, the works of necessity, as

caring for the cattle, Luke 13:15, and the works of mercy, such as caring for the sick, lending aid where man or beast is in need, Luke 14:3; Matt. 12:11. All such works are therefore in agreement with the fundamental principle of the Law, i. e. love, and to neglect these would conflict therewith. In general, the Lord declared that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath, Mark 2:27, hence that the commandment to keep holy the sabbath might never be obeyed in such a manner that man should suffer therefrom. All of the above concerned the sabbath of the Old Testament so that such works are surely no less permitted under the New Testament dispensation.

The question whether this or that can or cannot be considered as a work of necessity, has always been found difficult to answer, as Scripture gives us no directions which would enable us to do so. At least no one has yet been able to find such directions. To a certain extent this matter must be left to the personal convictions of the believers for themselves. But only to a certain extent, for there is a limit. It is not so, that the Church must be satisfied with every one's personal conviction in this regard, and must permit every one to do things as he pleases on the sabbath. If a man thinks he may do a certain thing on the day of rest, and offends others thereby, then this offense must be sufficient reason to him for not doing so, for he may not offend others. If he does so anyway, then he sins, and by this sin, as an open one, he makes himself liable to Church discipline. A tender, Godfearing conscience will rather take too little liberty than too much, Matt. 18:6; 1 Cor. 8:13.

Matt. 12:5, Or have ye not read in the law, that on the sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless.

Luke 13:15, But the Lord answered them, and said, Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

Luke 14:3-5, And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not? and they held their peace. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. And He said unto them, which of you shall have an ox or an ass fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a sabbath day?

Romans 14:5, 6a, One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto God; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.

Col. 2:16, Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day.

Matt. 18:6, But who shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.

1 Cor. 8:13, Wherefore if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble.

3. **The Substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath.** The substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh, dates, as Church History tells us, from the time of the Apostles, so that it must have received Apostolic sanction. The term "Day of the Lord" in the writings of the oldest Church Fathers indicates Sunday, and that name we find already in Rev. 1:10. Other evidences in Scripture of keeping the Sunday as a day dedicated to the service of the Lord are the request of Paul to lay by something for the congregation at Jerusalem on the first day of the week, 1 Cor. 16:1, and the religious assemlbly at Troas, with the ministering of the Word and the Sacraments, also on the first day of the week, Acts 20:7. Furthermore it is worthy of note how, through the resurrection of the Lord, the first appearance unto the Apostles, the second appearance to them with Thomas in their midst, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, again and again the first day is glorified and made into a day of blessing. In general this change is in beautiful harmony with the character of the New Testament. The Old Testament dispensation also was a dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, but in a legal form, and in agreement therewith the six days of labor preceded and the Sabbath day followed. But the New Testament brought a full revelation of the character of the Covenant of Grace, and it is in complete agreement with that character that the Day of Rest, procured by Christ, should come first and then the six days of labor. Our work is no longer work to arrive at the Day of Rest, but work which proceeds from the Day of Rest.

473. **The Fifth Commandment.**—This commandment — the first of the second table, in which our duties to our neighbors are prescribed — is the commandment in which the Lord expressly ordains the authority of man over man. Literally this commandment speaks only of parental authority, the most beautiful, the fundamental form of authority, but therein is implied the divine sanction of the authority of all who have been placed over us. Without this ordinance of God no man would have the right to exercise authority over another man, for before God all men are alike, and each other's "neighbors." Even parents would have no right to exercise authority over their children. The true motive, therefore, of parents and teachers and the government for exercising authority must be that God has given them that authority, and that therefere they are duty bound before God to maintain this authority, and that they must give an account to God of the use which they have made of this authority. And for children, subordinaces, and subjects the true motive for acknowledging and subjecting themselves to this authority must be that God has so commanded them, so that opposition to legal authority

is opposition to God, for which every one shall have to give an account to Him.

The authority, the correct exercise and the obedient subjection to this authority, is one of the fundamental matters of the entire civic and social life. It is not without reason that this commandment is placed at the head of the second table. Revolution could hardly show more clearly that it came from hell than by directly placing itself in opposition to this commandment and writing upon its banners, Ni Dieu, ni Maitre(neither God nor master), Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism, Bolshevism originated from it and spread with startling rapidity.

What may be regarded as still more alarming is the fact that the New Pedagogy, which reigns in the Public Schools, does the same thing with its enthusiasm concerning "the majesty of the child." According to it "the child is the majesty, before which the parents must bow; they have no rights, only duties; all the rights are on the side of the child. If the child does not turn out well, if it does not learn, if it is not happy, then this is all due to the parents. To demand piety, respect, and obedience from the children is altogether out of order. That would merely foster the disposition of a slave. Instead of that one should appreciate and foster in a child independence, free control over itself, and individual development. Children must not learn obedience in the first place, but must be treated justly" (Dr. Bavinck). In this spirit the present generation is brought up, in systematic opposition to the fifth commandment. Is it strange that men complain of the increase of crime, of the over-crowding of prisons? They themselves substantiate their complaint with statistics, and yet, having eyes, they do not see, but continue in undermining civil justice, abolishing capital punishment, calling crime a disease, etc.

That in this commandment only parental authority is spoken of, is not without reason, since that authority is the foundation for all other authority. In the measure that authority is obeyed in the family, in which future subjects and citizens are educated, shall authority and order, and therewith the general welfare, flourish or decay in the entire social life.

In answer to the question: What doth God require in the fifth commandment? the Catechism beautifully says: a) That I show all honor, love, and fidelity to my father and mother, and all in authority over me; — b) and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and — c) also bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

The fifth commandment is a commandment with a promise; a promise which is repeated in the New Testament as one concerning

us also, in the words: That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

> Rom. 13:1, Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God.

474. **The Sixth Commandment.**—In the four succeeding commandments the Lord protects over against us that which our neighbor has received from Him, by forbidding us to encroach thereon, or to seek to rob him thereof. First of all, in the sixth commandment, life, for that is the highest of all earthly possessions.

The Catechism, pressing to the root of the matter also in this case, says that in this commandment the Lord demands: a) not only not to kill the neighbor, but also not to dishonor him, or hate him, or insult him; not only not to do this oneself but also not to do it through others; not to do it through an act, but also not through a word or sign or even thought; — b) to lay aside all desire for revenge, for desire for revenge is born where our ego is most prominent so that we regard all injury to that ego as a crime which must be avenged. Lamech is an example of this, Gen. 4:23, 24; — c) nor injure ourselves, or recklessly walk into danger, much less deprive ourselves of life. And to cause the earnestness of this command to be felt, the Catechism adds: Wherefore also the magistrate is armed with the sword, to prevent murder.

And since in forbidding murder God teaches us "that He abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that He accounts all these as murder," Matt. 5:21, 22; 1 John 3:15, it follows that in this commandment He decrees, not only that we shall not attack the life of our neighbor, but that we shall "love our neighbor as ourselves; show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness, toward him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; that we do good, even to our enemies," Qu. 106, 107.

Regarding this commandment is still to be noted that:

a. The ordinance of God: Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man, Gen. 9:6, does not belong to the Levitical institutions, which lost their validity under the New Testament dispensation, but to the divine ordinances in the covenant with Noah. From this, as well as from the ground mentioned "for in God's image created He him," it is evident that no government has the right to abolish capital punishment.

b. From this Commandment, as the commandment that takes life under protection, it follows that we have the right and duty to protect and defend our own life. It is therefore lawful to slay

in self-defense a person who attacks us or is on the point of attacking us with murderous intent. In Exod. 22:2 it is even said: If the thief be found breaking in, and be smitten so that he dieth, there shall be no blood-guiltiness for him (that is if it happens by night, v.3). To kill in war is a matter of defending our people and our land, to a certain extent also of self-defense, and of obedience to the powers that are set over us. For the legality of the war these powers are responsible.

c. The sixth Commandment forbids also to endanger our lives needlessly, and this includes that we may not have communion with such doing by attending balloon ascensions, races, etc.

d. Concerning the question whether every person committing suicide must be regarded as lost, the Reformed theologians have warned against judging too harshly, especially when the act is committed while insane or in a moment of insanity. Being only men who look on the outward appearance of things, we are not able to judge, and we are not called to judge.

e. That every one making himself guilty of the crime of Neo-Malthusianism is a murderer before God.

> Matt. 5:21, 22, Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill is in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire.
>
> 1 John 3:15a, Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

475. **The Seventh Commandment.**—After protecting life, the Lord takes under His protection the bond of matrimony and the family; truly an evidence of the great significance which the Lord attaches to them. He forbids that we should give it a mortal wound with our own hand by practicing adultery. Just because adultery attacks the essence of matrimony, He has given to the innocent the right to separate from the guilty, and at the same time has declared separation in all other cases illegal, Matt. 5:32.

But in this commandment also more is implied. It teaches us, says the Catechism, "that all uncleanness is accursed of God; and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, and live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock, or in single life; that since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, we must preserve them pure and holy: therefore He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatsoever can entice men thereto.

The last words: "and whatsoever can entice men thereto" calls to our attention theatres, dances, vaudettes, immoral pictures,

immoral books, immoral clothing as things tending to entice men thereto, and which should be shunned by every one that nameth the name of the Lord, in order "to preserve pure and holy both our body and soul, which are temples of the Holy Ghost." The sense of shame has been given us to guard against immorality, and we must see to it that this sense be not weakened, for that is the beginning of moral decline. And the fearful, loathsome, deadly diseases which the Lord has attached to crimes against this commandment are evidence of the fact that the Catechism can truthfully say that all uncleanliness is accursed of God.

The manner in which in our time and in our country the sanctity of matrimony is undermined should awaken anxious thought. Not only is "free love" preached ever less shamefully; but even the Government and the civil judicial powers make themselves guilty, because of the frivolous way in which they grant divorces for all manner of reasons. They think they are doing well by dissolving unfortunate marriages, but they forget that that which is opposed to the Law of God can never have blessed results, and that unfortunate marriages increase as it becomes easier to secure divorce.

It should be also noted that the marriage laws of the Old Testament still are valid, so that marriage in the closest degrees of relationship are forbidden by God. Also that the Church demands of its members that they have the marriage ceremony performed in the public service, when the congregation has come together with its God. He who wishes to enter into the state of matrimony in the fear of the Lord should make thankful use of the opportunity which is given him for that purpose, regarding it as an inestimable privilege that he may enjoy the prayer and blessing of the congregation at the beginning of his married life.

> Matt. 5:32, But I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress; and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.

476. **The Eighth Commandment.**—In the eighth commandment the Lord establishes the right of private property; for this is the ground for the command, thou shalt not steal. If there were no right of private property, there would be no such crime as theft.

This right of personal property is not absolute, but relative. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, 1 Cor. 10:26; He is its creator, is its owner in the absolute sense; we are stewards, no more. From this follows: a) the duty of contributing toward the things of the Kingdom of God according to one's ability. Under the Old Testament dispensation Israel had to contribute the tithes. To say that this ordinance still holds is to mistake the character of the New Testament, as the dispensation of freedom. But it is

a misuse of this liberty to suppose that we may now contribute less because we are freed from legal requirements. — b) the duty of giving of our possessions to the poor and needy. In the congregation at Jerusalem, when "not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own," but they had all things in common, Acts 4:32, we see how greatly this duty is felt if love holds sway. This does not mean that that which today is called Communism is Biblical, for this Communism is directly opposed to the eighth commandment, whereas at Jerusalem the right of private property was maintained, Acts 5:4a. He who sold of his possession to give to the poor, did so voluntarily; no one urged him, and nowhere is it enjoined as a duty; — c) the duty of using one's possessions in general in such a manner as to have the approval of God, not only for one's own benefit, but for the benefit of others as well: — d) the sinful character of all greed; for he who is greedy as well as he who misuses or is a spendthrift treats these possessions as if they were absolutely his own, and that is to "rob God," Mal. 3:8.

In stealing, the Catechism explains, the Lord forbids "not only those thefts, and robberies, which are punishable by the magistrate; but He comprehends under the name of theft all wicked tricks and devices, whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which belong to our neighbor: whether it be by force, or under the appearance of right, as by unjust weights, ells, measures, fraudulent merchandise, false coins, usury, or by any other way forbidden by God." Much could be added to this for the means of securing the possessions of our neighbor are legion. We mention, not paying one's debts, keeping back wages by fraud, not returning that which was borrowed, quietly keeping found articles, idling away another's time, etc.

God's ordinance in this commandment is openly contradicted by Socialism which characterizes the possession of capital as theft, and Communism which does the same in regard to private property. Both expect to remove all social wrongs when their theories have gained the ascendency, and both fail to consider the curse of sin. As long as sin is not taken away it is vain to look for an ideal social life. Social abuses will never be removed by measures which conflict with the eighth commandment, but will disappear in proportion as this Commandment is obeyed, and each one renders to all their dues, Rom. 13:7.

Being in conflict with the commandment of God, the two movements mentioned show themselves to be under the influence of the lie.

Acts 5:4a, While it remained, did it not remain your own; and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?

477. **The Ninth Commandment.**—There is still another possession which is of great value to man here on earth, and that is his honor and good name, his position in social life, his rights and privileges, to which he has claim by his conduct. To protect him in the maintenance of those rights is the purpose of the ninth commandment, which forbids our bearing false witness against our neighbor.

Evidently this Commandment primarily refers to bearing witness before court. It does not forbid giving an unfavorable testimony, but it demands that our testimony shall always be true, that, as the Catechism says, "in judgment and in all other dealings I love the truth, speak it uprightly and confess it; also that I defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor." To speak the truth uprightly may require to give an unfavorable testimony, which is then our duty. But the Commandment forbids bearing false witness against our neighbor; for such witness is a virulent attack on his good name and honor, on the rights and privileges he enjoys as a citizen, and such an attack can never do more harm than in court.

But this Commandment does not limit itself to this. It also includes, says the Catechism, "that I bear false witness against no man, nor falsify any man's words; that I be no backbiter, nor slanderer; that I do not judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly, or unheard; that I avoid all sort of lies and deceit, as the proper works of the devil, unless I would bring down upon me the heavy wrath of God," Qu. 112.

Worthy of note are the words "as the proper works of the devil," severe words, yet entirely in agreement with what the Lord says in John 8:44. Just as severe is the expression: "unless I would bring down upon me the heavy wrath of God," for sin against this Commandment is to place oneself directly in the service of him who "is a liar, and the father thereof."

> John 8:44, Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father thereof.

478. **The Tenth Commandment.**—This Commandment does not have reference, as is sometimes asserted, to all desires, so that all good desires would also be forbidden, but it refers, as is evident from the contents, to all sinful desires, and means to forbid them. It refers back to the four preceding commandments which forbade sinning with deeds and with words. And now the Lord declares to us that we may not commit the sins referred to in those commandments in our hearts, in our thoughts, by desiring anything which is our neighbors. From this it follows that all evil desires

with reference to the other commandments is also forbidden by the Lord.

The Catechism answers the question: What doth the tenth commandment require of us? as follows: That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never rise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness, Qu. 113.

PRAYER AS THE CHIEF PART OF THANKFULNESS

479. **What is Meant by Prayer?**—Praying is exercising communion with God, placing ourselves before His face to speak to Him, to pour out our hearts before Him. It consists principally of four matters: 1. Confession of our own unworthiness, depravity and sinfulness, which is always fitting when we approach God, and which should be a heartfelt necessity to all believers. 2. Adoration, which is the expression of a deep sense, of a fervent admiration of the glory of God, which sense and admiration find expression in praise and glorification. 3. Supplication, which makes known to the Lord one's own needs as well as those of others, and asks that the Lord fulfill them. 4. Thanksgiving, which humbly gives the Lord honor for the benefits received.

Such prayer is offered privately in the inner chamber, Matt. 6:6, or publicly in family worship, in public worship, in meetings, or on other occasions. There is also prayer through inner ejaculations and petitions even while we are engaged in our daily work, Neh. 2:4, but such prayer is not considered here.

In prayer we cause our bodies to take part in it. In the Scriptures we read of holding up the hands, Num. 17:11, of lifting up the eyes unto heaven, Luke 18:13, of kneeling down, 2 Chron. 6:13; Luke 22:41; Acts 20:36, 21:5. Our custom is to bare our heads as a sign of respect, to close our eyes so that we may not be detracted, to fold our hands as one bound, to bend the knees as an expression of humiliation. In the history of the Reformed Churches there has been a time when in public worship the entire congregation kneeled during prayer, and also a time when the entire congregation arose to its feet and remained standing during prayer, both customs that were surely more suitable than our custom of remaining seated. Even before men do we arise when we wish to show them respect and honor. In Roman Catholic churches the seats are provided with kneeling stools.

480. **The necessity of Prayer.**—To ask whether prayer is necessary is surely not superfluous. For we are certain that God knows all our necessities, Matt. 6:32b, that because of His Fatherly love He cares for His people, Matt. 6:30, and that His counsel shall stand and that He will do all His pleasure, Is. 46:10.

In the Catechism the question is therefore put: Why is prayer necessary for Christians? And the answer is: Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us; and also, because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them, Qu. 116.

Thus prayer is necessary because God demands it, and because our condition demands it.

1. God demands it, Matt. 7:7, 8; Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17. That should settle the matter. God demands it, because He demands thankfulness, and prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. This expression, however, is somewhat strange. Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness? Think, for instance, of suffering and fighting for the Gospel, as Paul did, or think of walking in santification and piety. But first, we must not forget that there is more to prayer than petitioning for the fulfilling of our needs (Cf. §479). And secondly, the main thing is here that we have a correct conception of santification, and keep in view that it is the expression of thankfulness, so that every good work bears its proper character according as it is an expression of thankfulness. And then it is evident that in no good work does thankfulness find more direct and full expression than in prayer. As a seeking for communion with God it is the expression of love, for it is love that seeks communion, as it has need of it. In the confession prayer is the expression of humility which glorifies God's grace. In the adoration prayer is the expression of admiration, which glorifies God's majesty and the infinity of His virtues. In the supplication prayer is the expression of one's own dependence, which glorifies God as the source of all good. In the thanksgiving prayer is the expression of thankfulness, which glorifies God in His goodness and liberality. All sanctification, if it were possible without prayer, would have no value before God without prayer; for only when it is accompanied with the incense of prayer is sanctification pleasing to God.

2. But our condition also demands prayer. The Catechism does not hesitate to say decidedly, "because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them." Thereby is not denied that daily a stream of blessings pours down from heaven upon those who do not pray, that God even fills the hearts of the heathen with food and gladness, Acts 14:17. But it does say that the Lord deals otherwise with His people who have again been brought to life. In the Scriptures they are ever admonished to pray, as the way of securing the good gifts of the Holy Spirit, Matt. 7:7, 8; Luke 11:13, and other passages. James writes: Ye have not, be-

cause ye do not ask (4:2). And thus it is again evident how that the Lord does not deal with them as with mere objects, but as with persons. As a rule He gives them His grace and Holy Spirit only upon earnest prayer, in order that in connection with receiving His benefits they should be the more conscious of the fact that He is the Giver, and in order that they should value these benefits the more and should be the more thankful.

We shall enjoy more or less spiritual welfare, according as our lives are lives of prayer. If we are slow to pray, we need not search far for the cause of our spiritual barreness.

The matter of prayer is the matter of abiding in Christ, and this is the absolute condition for bearing fruit, John 15:4, 5. Hence, prayer may indeed be called the chief part of thankfulness.

> Matt. 6:32b, For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
>
> Matt. 6:30, But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith.
>
> Matt. 7:7, 8, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
>
> Luke 18:1, And He spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint.
>
> 1 Thess. 5.17, Pray without ceasing.
>
> Luke 11:13, If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.
>
> John 15, 4, 5, Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, and ye are the branches; He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit for apart from Me ye can do nothing.

481. **The Requirements of an Acceptable Prayer.**—As the requirements of an acceptable prayer, the Catechism mentions:

a. That it must be directed to "the one true God only, who has manifested Himself in His word." Without that it can surely not be a true prayer to God. Prayers to angels or to the saints or to a god of one's own making, are in vain.

b. That it must have as its contents "all the things, He has commanded us to ask Him." In this respect the Lord's Prayer must especially be an example to us.

c. "That we from the heart pray," so that it must be a matter of the heart," and not merely of the lips.

d. That it must be a humble petition. We must "rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, so that we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of His divine majesty."

e. That it must be a believing prayer, i. e. a prayer from a

heart which believes that prayer is heard, Mark 11:23, 24; James 1:5-7; for which it is certain "that He, notwithstanding we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as He promised in His Word," Qu. 117.

482. **The Hearing of Prayer.**—The promises that prayer shall be heard are strong and numerous in the Scriptures. In Luke 11:5-13 the Lord repeats one assurance after another, to impress deeply upon the mind the certainty that prayer is heard. First we find there the Parable of the Friend at Midnight to show that if man does not refuse an earnest petition even though it be inconvenient for him to grant it, we certainly may not for a moment foster the impious thought that He, with whom there is no such inconvenience, would do so. And this questioner in the impertinence and impudence with which he dare ask, is pointed out to us as an example. Then follow the direct assurances. Ask, and it shall be given unto you, etc., and again, for every one that asketh receiveth, etc. Then again an appeal to that which may be expected from man, with the implied admonition not to place the heavenly Father beneath an earthly father who is evil. The latter gives to his son who asks for bread, or a fish, or an egg, not a stone, or a serpent, or a scorpion instead. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." And the parable of the Unjust Judge, Luke 18:1-8, is evidently intended to impress upon our hearts the lesson that by continual prayer we may receive that which would not be received without such prayer. The main particulars of this parable are so presented as it can serve to bring out this point the more strongly.

In regard to the difficulty that real hearing of prayer and granting of what we pray for seems to conflict with the fact that the counsel of God is unchangeable, and that this counsel is always executed, we may refer to what has been said in §96.

And to accept these assurances concerning the hearing of prayer with true faith and to rely thereon, when going to God, is of greater importance because that this is repeatedly pointed out as a condition for the hearing of prayer, Mark 11:23, 24; James 1:5-7. Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him, Heb. 11:6, and how would our approaching His throne of mercy be pleasing to Him, in case we approach in a manner which makes Him a liar in His most positive assurances concerning real hearing of prayer? It is a rule in the Kingdom of God that it shall be done unto us according to our faith, Matt. 9:29, and how can we expect hearing of prayer without believing in it, in spite of the strongest testimonies in that regard; without being "fully persuaded that He, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will,

for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as He has promised us in His Word?" If our faith in the hearing of Prayer is so weak, we need not ask why we experience so little in regard to answer to prayer.

> Luke 11:9-13, And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?
>
> Mark. 11:23, 24, Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.
>
> James 1:5-7, But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

483. **The Contents of Prayer.**—We may pray for "all things necessary for soul and body; which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer He Himself has taught us" (Qu. 118). "Things necessary for soul and body" include all things that we need, be it for the soul, to be saved, to walk in a way pleasing to the Lord, to fulfill our calling, etc., or for the body, such as food, clothing, etc.

But this word "necessary" can be interpreted in a narrower and in a broader sense; it can be taken as limited to those things which are absolutely indispensable for our spiritual and temporal existence, the things without which we would have to perish for time or eternity; but it can also be taken as including those things which are, not exactly indispensable to us, but which are nevertheless very desirable for our welfare, be it spiritual or temporal, and for such things we may also pray. The disciples prayed, Lord, increase our faith, Luke 17:5.

This difference is significant for the faith with which we pray. In so far as we pray for things necessary in the narrower sense, our faith must be faith that the Lord will surely grant that for which we pray, for in regard to this we have God's repeated promise, Luke 11:9-13, and other passages, so that doubt in this case is unbelief, which makes God a liar. For these things we may pray unconditionally. But if we ask for things which belong to things necessary in the broader sense, then our faith must be such

a trust in the love and wisdom of the Lord, that we entrust the giving of that for which we ask to him. That these things will also be given us when we pray, is not decidedly promised, but in places such as Luke 11:9-13 is implied the assurance that the Lord as our Father will give us that which He thinks is good for us. Therefore our asking for such things must be an asking in subjection to His will, an asking as that of the Saviour in Gethsemane: "not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

484. **The Lord's Prayer.**—The Lord gave us this prayer to teach us to pray. After this manner therefore pray ye, He said, Matt. 6:9. Hence there is no doubt that it may be used as a ritual prayer, but it may be a question whether it is proper to permit children to use it as a prayer at meals, and it is certainly not proper to repeat it thoughtlessly time after time as do the Roman Catholics. As is evident from the ritual prayers in our Liturgy, our fathers wished to have it used often in the public worship, and this ought to be done more often than is actually the case.

From the ritual prayers in our Liturgy it is also evident that the Reformed theologians of the time of the Reformation were not prejudiced against formulary prayers as was the case later, and, in fact, still is. They have left us many such prayers for various occasions, and those which occur in the Liturgical Forms are still in use. The opinion that the offering of such prayers cannot be other than work of the lips is groundless. This can be the case, but it can be the case no less in a free prayer.

But the fact that the Lord gave us this prayer to teach us to pray also means that we are to use it as a model, so that we should adapt our prayers accordingly, especially as far as the content is concerned. It is with a view to the great significance which this prayer has for our life of prayer that it is treated so much at length in the Catechism, and that the exposition of the Lord's Prayer may be lacking in no Reformed Doctrine.

It has an address, six petitions (two trios) and a doxological conclusion. We shall discuss each of these elements of the prayer briefly, and in that connection note especially what the Catechism confesses in regard to each.

485. **The Address.**—"Our Father which art in heaven," these are the words which the Lord taught us to use in addressing God in prayer.

"Our Father." Why thus? Because as New Testament believers we have received the adoption of sons, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!" so that we may approach God, not with the more legal feeling, which filled the Old Testament believers, but really as

children, not merely as servants, Ps. 116:16; so that we, as children, may come to Him as our Father, Gal. 4:5, 6.

Used in that sense, as the expression of a childlike frame of mind, the address will immediately place us in the proper disposition for prayer, i. e. that of "childlike reverence and confidence in God." These first words of our prayer will awaken in us the living consciousness of the fact that He, to whom we come, is our Father, and that we can therefore rely upon it that He will "much less deny us what we ask of Him in true faith, than our parents will refuse us earthly things," Qu. 120.

There is added the clause "which art in heaven" to remind us, in addition to the above, of His heavenly exaltedness and greatness, so that we, in our confidential approach as children to our Father, may not "form any earthly conceptions of God's heavenly majesty," may not forget what deep respect and reverence behooves us in approaching God and not fall into that familiarity which in some circles passes for intimacy; and also "that we may expect from His almighty power all things necessary for soul and body," Qu. 121.

Already in this respect do many prayers not conform to the model which the Lord gave us. Many a one does not dare to address God as Father, because he lacks the assurance of faith; and there are some who regard it as sinful self-exaltation, as if the Lord had not said: "After this manner therefore pray ye." Besides, there is with many people very little realization of what Scripture calls "the exceeding riches of God's grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:7. Hence their little faith in the hearing of prayer, and also their idea that approaching to God is to approach a wrathful Judge, as the God of the Covenant of Works, instead of being an approaching to God as the God of the Covenant of Grace, and therefore as our Father. They imagine that there is with God more unwillingness than willingness to give us good gifts; instead of much more than an earthly father, who is evil, they regard God as less prepared to do this; and they think that, if their prayers are to be heard, it must be because through tears and pleading they move Him to hear their prayer. Hence their way of praying in a manner like this: May it please Thee to permit Thyself to be persuaded by our prayers, thus praying "as the Gentiles do," Matt. 6:7, 8.

Lack of frankness in using the name "Father" is a sin of unbelief. By making us participants of His Covenant of Grace, He has, as the Baptismal Form says, "adopted us for His children and heirs," and by having us baptized into His name He has sealed that to us. To doubt or disregard our right to address Him as "our Father" is to doubt and disregard His Covenant and His Bap-

tism, both intended to assure us of the absolute truthfulness of His promise.

> **Ps. 116:16, O Jehovah surely I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds.**
>
> Gal. 4:5, 6, That He might redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
>
> Matt. 6:7, 8, And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard of their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

486. **The First Three Petitions.**—Just as in the Law the first table contains the commandments which concern our duties to God, so in the Lord's Prayer the first three petitions are devoted to divine things.

The first petition concerns God Himself, for His name is the expression of His Being, God in His revelation to us. That which is the highest next to God is His kingdom, and that is the object of the second petition. But a kingdom has two sides, a twofold glory. The first is the glory of the dominion as such, the power, the wisdom, the righteousness, the beneficence, the extent of that glory. The more a dominion is distinguished by all this, the more glorious it is. And the prayer of the second petition is that the dominion may be more distinguished by all this. But a kingdom has another side, another glory, and this lies with the subjects. This consists in the willingness and joy with which they subject themselves to it; therein that they love it, regard it as an honor and privilege to be subjected to it, praise and glorify it. And that the dominion of God may in this way become more complete and be praised in an ever wider circle, is the prayer of the third petition.

The above concerns the order and relation of those petitions. The following remarks are still to be made concerning the contents:

That the first prayer: Hallowed be thy name, expresses the desire that the Name of God be more and more manifest in honor and glory, that this glory may more and more break through the darkness with which sin, as a dark cloud, has darkened that name. And by causing this to be the first petition the Lord teaches us how this should be the first desire of our hearts, being conscious of the fact that in the entire universe there is nothing more worthy of taking place than that the great Name of God be hallowed and, driving away all that defiles and desecrates, be known and praised in His majesty and purity.

Thus, however, this petition will become one for personal need. It will make the one praying feel what need he has of grace to

hallow this most glorious Name of God, and thus it will include the petition: a) that one "may rightly know" God, to be more and more permeated with the fact that this Name is most worthy to be hallowed, and to be urged on to the hallowing of this name; — b) actually "to sanctify, glorify, and praise Him, in all His works, in which His power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and truth are clearly displayed"; and — c) "that we may so order and direct our lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that His Name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored and praised on our account," Qu. 122.

That the second petition: Thy kingdom come, as a petition for the ever continuing revelation of the dominion of God in its glory, with the destruction of everything that is opposed to it, includes prayer for: a) being "so ruled by His word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Him"; — b) "preservation and increase of the Church," in order that it may not be weakened by evil influences and decay, but spread abroad powerfully, and that through the addition of saved sinners and also through its influence upon the state and the community, it may become the more powerful an instrument for the coming of God's kingdom; and — c) destruction of the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against thee; and also all wicked counsels devised against thy holy word; till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all in all," Qu. 123.

That the third petition: Thy will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven, has reference, not to God's secret will, but to His revealed will, as is evident from the words. The first words: Thy will be done, taken in themselves, can be prayed with reference to God's secret will, and in that case such a petition is the expression of an implicit child-like trust of the believer in the will and the rule of God, as a rule which is governed by the highest love and wisdom, and which leads to the attainment of the highest purpose. To pray in that way, especially in case of trying circumstances, takes selfdenial and submission, but the condition of our life of faith is not favorable if we cannot do this. But the entire petition cannot be prayed with reference to God's secret will, because this secret will has always been done and will always be done on earth as it is in heaven, and therefore need not be prayed for. But, since sin entered into the world, the revealed will is not done on earth as it is done in heaven, and hence the prayer that even as before the fall this will be done perfectly and with joy.

Hence, according to the Catechism, this prayer includes principally two things:

a. "Grant that we and all men may renounce our own will, and without murmuring obey thy will, which is only good." Thus a

renunciation of our own will in order to be obedient to the will of God, even then when our will should desire something good, as David when he desired to build the Lord a house, and the will of the Lord should be otherwise, and that without any murmuring, and with complete readiness of heart.

b. Grant "that so every one may attend to, and perform the duties of his station and calling, willingly and faithfully as the angels do in heaven," Qu. 124. God's will is done so perfectly in heaven because of the fact that the angels execute that which is given them, no matter what that task may be, so willingly and faithfully. We also have a task, a calling, a daily occupation which is given us by God who rules everything. And God's will is not done on earth as it is done in heaven, as long as each one does not perform his task and calling, his farm work, his business, or whatever it be, as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven execute theirs. Thus this petition teaches us to make our daily occupation, which many think has no connection with the service of God, decidedly a service of God, and to seek therein the Kingdom of God, as is meant in Matt. 6:33.

> Matt. 6:33, But seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

487. **The Last Three Petitions.**—These concern our needs and those of our neighbors, just as in the Law the commandments concerning our duties to our neighbors are in order in the second place. And in this trio there is also order and correlation. The fourth petition is a petition for daily bread, and as such concerns our existence as human beings on earth, because God has created us as creatures that cannot live, cannot exist upon earth without food. And in this existence not only the body, but the soul also is concerned. The other two petitions concern spiritual needs, in which in the same manner not only the soul, but the body as well is concerned; these petitions are for the remission of sins, and for protection from all evil which threatens us.

The fourth petition: Give us this day our daily bread, is a petition for material nourishment. The meaning is perverted when it is explained as having reference to spiritual bread. It is self-evident, however, that it is not only a petition to have daily bread, but also to enjoy it in a manner glorifying to God. For this purpose we need: first, to be conscious of, to feel deeply, the fact that this bread is the gift of God, that we owe it not to our care or our industry, but to Him, so that it may be to us a reason for acknowledging and glorifying Him as "the only fountain of all good." It is a prayer for daily bread, bread for the present, so that it must be asked for each day anew, and the petition each day reminds us of our dependence.

The second matter, of which we must be conscious in order to use the bread in a manner which glorifies God, is that the bread in itself has no power to feed us and to maintain our lives, but that it does this only because God has so ordained, through the word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God, Matt. 4:4, so that, therefore, not even "God's gifts can profit us without His blessing," in order that we may not expect any benefit from this bread in itself and make ourselves guilty of idolatry with respect to it, but "withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it alone in God," Qu. 125.

> Matt. 4:4, But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The fifth petition: And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, has two parts. The first is described by the Catechism as follows: "Be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute to us poor sinners, our transgressions, nor that depravity, which cleaves to us always." And the second part is described to us as follows: "even as we feel this evidence of thy grace in us, that it is our firm resolution from the heart to forgive our neighbor," Qu. 126.

Thus the Catechism makes the fact that the one praying can add the second part to the first, a ground for the hearing of prayer. And that, indeed, it is, not in a positive but in a negative sense. Not so that our forgiving our neighbor will cause us to receive forgiveness from God, but so that our refusing to forgive our neighbor will surely cause us not to receive forgiveness from God. We may depend upon the Lord's willingness to forgive us, unless we ourselves would be unwilling to forgive our neighbor, for in that case, as the Lord expressly declared in Matt. 6:14, 15, we need not expect remission of our sins from God. If, therefore, the petitioner can say in God's presence that through His grace this obstacle to the hearing of prayer does not exist, than he can be certain that remission will be granted him, but then only. The second part must necessarily be added to the first, and in this lies a very earnest reason for a disposition to forgive.

> Matt. 6:14, 15, For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The sixth petition: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, has also two parts. The first is a petition that God not lead us into temptation. Now the word "temptation" occurs in two senses: to test, and to attempt to entice into doing evil. In the first sense God tempts, Gen. 22:1, and in the second sense God

does not tempt, James 1:13; temptation in this sense is the work of Satan, as he tempted Adam and Eve, and continuously tempts us. We have need of temptation in the first sense; "without this temptation there would be no exercise of our faith, no straining of our moral strength, no growing in grace," and indeed our life is a series of these temptations. In the second sense temptation may lead to a deep fall, but also, in God's grace, to a glorious victory.

To the question in which sense temptation is here to be taken, the answer is not the same among us. From the second part of the petition, which is not a separate petition, but is destined to supplement the first, the conclusion can be made that in this case such a temptation is meant as that in which Satan has a hand, which is his work. The first part, however, seems to refer to that temptation which is the work of God. But since, because of the absolute rule of God, Satan can never go further than God permits, and since he is never anything but an instrument of God, his temptation can be ascribed to God, as is done in 1 Sam. 24:1, cf. 1 Chron. 21:1.

The Catechism does not enter into a discussion of this distinction, but takes "temptation" in the general sense, as something that is always dangerous for us, and in which we have always need of God's protection and strengthening. Hence, the explanation of this petition in the Catechism is as follows "do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory"; and this because, a) "since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment"; and — b) "since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world and our own flesh, cease not to assault us," Qu. 127.

> James 1:13, Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, and He Himself tempteth no man.
>
> 2 Sam. 24:1, And again the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah.
>
> 1 Chron. 21:1, And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.

488. **The Doxological Conclusion.**—The conclusion is a beautiful doxology, which as such is in place in prayer, because adoration belongs to a prayer (Cf. §480), and has significance as a ground for pleading, since all the virtues of God are so many promises to the believer. Just as the address is destined to awaken in the heart of the one praying a child-like, trusting frame of mind, and

to strengthen the faith in the hearing of prayer, so also this conclusion. It points out to us in our praying that the God whom we approach, as the God whose is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever, is the God who surely can give that which we ask of Him, and just as surely will give that which we ask of Him, since we did not ask anything but that which could serve to the furthering of His kingdom, His power, and His glory. "That is," says the Catechism, "all those things we ask of thee, because thou, being our King and almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby, not we, but thy holy Name, may be glorified for ever," Qu. 128. Thus this conclusion serves to prepare for a believing "Amen."

489. **The Concluding Word "Amen."**—The word "Amen" is a word left untranslated from the Hebrew in the Scriptures. Already in the Old Testament it was used for a solemn assurance, Deut. 27:15. It is also the same word which the Lord used so often in teaching and admonishing, and which is then translated in the Scriptures by "verily, verily" (I say unto you). To conclude our prayer thus is, therefore, taught us by the Lord Himself, and if we do it we follow the example He has given us.

Often, however, it is for us but a hollow sound, with which we are accustomed to end our prayers, and further without meaning. That it may be least of all. The Catechism says: "Amen signifies, it shall truly and certainly be; for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him," Qu. 129. Thus it expresses a firm faith in the hearing of prayer. It does not say "more assuredly than I feel in my heart that I shall be heard," but "more assuredly than I feel in my heart that I desire to be heard of Him." This desiring to be heard shall never be lacking in a prayer that is not mere work of the lips, and it can be very strong even though faith that we will be heard is weak. But how strong this desire may be the hearing of prayer is still more certain. For the guarantee of the hearing of prayer does not lie in us, but therein that God is our Father, and that His is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

There is reason for being in earnest with the address "Our Father," but there is no less reason for regarding seriously the concluding word "Amen." For it must even react upon the contents of our prayer, since it asks that we pray in such a way, and only for such things, that we can be certain of the hearing of prayer upon the grounds of the Word of God, and can conclude our prayer with a believing "Amen."

In this sense it is used as the concluding word of the sermon,

and as such it is well suited to this purpose also. It then expresses the fact that the preacher is conscious of having delivered, not the word of man, but the Word that is "true and certain," according to which we must conduct ourselves, and according to which God will judge. And it demands of him that he take care that, to the best of his belief, and according to the light granted him, he can speak it with that purpose.

SIXTH DIVISION

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD

490. **Fruit of Prophecy.**—The last part of the Reformed Doctrine derives its content from prophecy, for without it we would know nothing concerning the termination of this world-process. Of the faith in the immortality of the soul only can it be said that it is common to all people, even the most uncivilized. "All people proceed from the conviction that man is by nature immortal, and that it is not immortality which must be proved, but death which must be explained." But as to the end of the world, the light of nature leaves us totally in the dark; Heathendom never had any idea of the things that are to happen at that time. When Paul on the Areopagus preached the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, this was something entirely new to the Greeks, something absurd, they made sport of it, Acts 17:32. Even in the realm of Revelation this doctrine has repeatedly encountered contradiction and opposition. The Sadducees would have no more of it than the heathen, Acts 23:8, and tried to make the doctrine laughable, Luke 20:7 ff.; in the congregation at Corinth there were some who said that there was no resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor. 15:12; and Hymenaeus and Philotus taught that the resurrection had already taken place. And unbelief still makes sport of the doctrine as presented in Scripture. It may speak of an end of the world, but then f. i. as a result of the fact that some time the sun will be burned out (as if it could explain what kept the sun burning at least six thousand years!), so that everything on earth will perish from cold and darkness and starvation.

The Lord has, however, not left the Church in uncertainty concerning the consummation of the world. It is true that many questions can be put in regard to the matter for which no answer can be found, but that which is of importance for us to know the Lord has revealed concerning:

1. The state of the soul after death;
2. The second coming of Christ;
3. Resurrection and judgment;
4. Eternal life and eternal death.

1. State of the Soul after Death

491. **What the Word of God Teaches concerning this.**—In regard to the state of the soul after death until the resurrection the Holy Scriptures teach:

1. That the souls are conscious and capable of spiritual activity. The souls of the martyrs are presented to us in Rev. 6:8, 10 as knowing that their blood was not yet avenged, and as desiring it and praying for it. And in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the former saw Abraham from afar and Lazarus in his bosom; and he also thought of his brothers on earth, Luke 16.

2. That the souls of believers enjoy salvation immediately after death, and that those of the wicked suffer pains. Paul desired, as something far better, "to depart and be with Christ," Phil. 1:23; Lazarus was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom, and was comforted, Luke 16:22; the Lord promised the malefactor "today shalt thou be with me in Paradise," Luke 23:43, and in 2 Cor. 12:2 and 4 Paradise is identified with the third heaven; the tree of life is in the midst of the Paradise of God, Rev. 2:7. "According to Rev. 6:8, 7:9, etc. the souls of the martyrs and of those saved are in heaven, before the throne of God and before the Lamb, clothed with long, white garments, and with palm branches in their hands. For blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; and they rest from their labors which they have performed upon the earth and which follow with them, Rev. 14:13; Hebr. 4:9; and they live and rule with Christ all the time until His second coming, Rev. 20:4, 6" (Bavinck). Asaph was already certain of this: Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory, Ps. 73:24.

The rich man, on the contrary, opened his eyes in hell, being in torments, Luke 16:23, there are the "spirits in prison," 1 Peter 3:19, and there they are kept "under punishment unto the day of judgment," 2 Peter 2:9.

In all these passages, therefore, the Scriptures teach that the souls immediately after death go to their own places, but complete bliss, as well as utter woe, will begin only after the end of the world. It is true that complete salvation is already prepared for the believers, but it shall be revealed only in the end of time, 1 Peter 1:5. Then only did Paul expect to receive the crown of righteousness, 2 Tim. 4:8, then only will the marriage of the lamb come, Rev. 19:7. For bliss cannot be complete as long as the body is in the power of death and cannot share in it, and as long as this bliss cannot be enjoyed in communion with the entire congregation of those saved, the entire glorified body of Christ.

> 1 Peter 1:5, Who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

2 Tim. 4:8, Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.

492. **The Roman Catholic Doctrine.**—The Roman Church teaches that there are four places, and therewith four states, for the souls after death. According to them there is, besides heaven and hell, a purgatory, and also a limbus infantum, i. e. a place for children who have not been baptized.

To heaven go only those few who die immediately after being baptized, and thus leave this world free from all sin and pollution, or those who have adjusted every guilt which they might have through penance and good works. It is even possible at death to be in possession of "superfluous good works," i. e. in possession of more good works than are necessary for salvation, and of these the Church becomes the heir, which can sell them to others (indulgence).

To hell, however, go all those who die without the communion of the Roman Church as the alone-saving.

Purgatory is a place of purification in the lower regions, where those who are destined for heaven but who still had sins at death which had not been adjusted through penance and good works, are purified from all sin and pollution, to be taken into heaven thereafter. According to the Roman Catholics such a place is spoken of in passages as Matt. 12:32 and 1 Cor. 3:12-15. The length of time the souls spend in purgatory depends upon the measure of guilt, but really much more upon the relatives and friends the dead have left behind them, for they can, by having the Church say masses for the dead (i. e. by paying for these masses) and through gifts to the Church, and also by saying many paternosters for the dead, do much to shorten the time. Purgatory is a rich source of revenue for the Roman Church.

Matt. 12:32, And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.

1 Cor. 3:12-15, But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire, and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he shall build thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire.

The limbus infantum is destined for children who die unbaptized. For according to the Roman Church baptism is absolutely indispensable to salvation, so that such children cannot be admitted to heaven and another place must be provided for them. About

their condition there, various opinions are held, some of them hard, others less so. The opinion is generally held that they continue to exist without any positive pain, but also without positive enjoyment.

In addition there is, according to the Roman Church, also a limbus patrum, where the believers of the Old Testament remained after their death, until through Christ in His descent into hell they were drawn up from thence and led into heaven (Cf. §227).

493. **The Doctrine of a "Realm of the Dead."**—In recent times the opinion has been defended, which was held by several of the old Church fathers, that we are not to regard "Sheol" in the Old Testament and "Hades" in the New Testament as a place of torment, but a "realm of the dead," where all the souls are gathered to await judgment. According to some the souls exist there without bliss or woe, while according to others the believers enjoy an initial bliss, and the wicked must bear an initial woe. Those who hold this theory try to prove it from some Old Testament passages in which a somber representation is given of the state of the soul after death, but it is in direct conflict with the clear statements mentioned in the preceding paragraph (Phil. 1:23; Luke 16:22; 23:43; Rev. 8:9; Ps. 73:24). In the Catechism the Church confesses that the souls of believers "after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its head," Qu. 57.

494. **The Doctrine of a "Sleep of the Soul."**—Another error, which has also been resurrected in recent times, is that of the "sleep of the soul." According to this teaching the souls separated from the body pass the time until the resurrection in an unconscious, sleeping condition. Passages such as those mentioned in §491 (Luke 16:27, 28; Rev. 6:9, 10; Phil. 1:23) teach otherwise.

495. **The Doctrine of a "Second Probation".**—In agreement with the doctrine of "the realm of the dead," in England the teaching has been spread that, at least to those who have not heard it here, the Gospel is still preached in the realm of the dead, and that those who then believe and accept are saved. But the Scriptures teach that in the judgment each one shall receive the things done in the body, 2 Cor. 5:10, that the Heathen will be without excuse because they had had the general revelation of God in nature, Rom. 1:18-20; that they, doing things concerning which they know that those who do them are worthy of death, will be held responsible for their nevertheless doing them and consenting with those that practised them, Rom. 1:32; that those who have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law, Rom. 2:12; and that the part of the

idolaters shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, Rev. 21:8, (Cf. §227).

2 Cor. 5:10, For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Rom. 1:20, For the invisible things of him since the beginning of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse.

Rom. 1:20, Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.

Rev. 21:8, But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

496. **The Doctrine of "Conditional Immortality."**—To the errors of the Adventists, Russelites and others, belongs the doctrine that death is annihilation, and that therefore the punishment of eternal death shall consist in being annihilated for ever, while only believers, who have eternal life, receive an eternally continued existence (Cf. §169). In Matt. 25:46, however, "eternal punishment" is contrasted with "eternal life," from which it follows that the punishment will be endless as well as the life, and an endless punishment is not possible without an endless existence. With respect to the rich man, annihilation is not spoken of, but it is said that "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," Luke 16:23. Furthermore the Scriptures teach that there will be degrees of punishment, that one will be beaten with many and another with few stripes, Luke 12:47, 48, but if death is to consist of annihilation, the punishment would be the same for all.

Matt. 25:46, And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life.

Luke 12:47, 48, And that servant, who knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.

2. The Second Coming of Christ

497. **The Time.**—The time of the second coming of Christ is not only not revealed to us in the Scriptures, but it is even expressly stated that it must remain hidden from us, Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7. It is said that His coming will be as that of a thief in the night, 2 Peter 3:10, as that of the flood of the days of Noah, Matt. 24:37, suddenly, therefore, unexpected, while the world continues its careless course. Therefore we must watch and take care to be pre-

pared always, Matt. 24:42, 44. It is therefore directly in conflict with the Word of God to believe oneself to be able to point out a definite year in which the second coming will take place. Still this has been done repeatedly.

This, however, does not mean that the day will come entirely unexpectedly to the believers, 1 Thess. 5:4, for the Lord has pointed out clearly many signs of His coming especially in Matt. 24, where He discusses His second coming extensively and adds the admonition: "when ye see all these things, know ye that it is nigh, even at the doors."

> Matt. 24:36, But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.
>
> Acts 1:7, And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority.
>
> Matt. 24:42, 44, Watch therefore, for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh.
>
> 1 Thess. 5:4, But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

498. **Signs.**—To the signs, which are pointed out to us in the Scriptures, belong:

1. That the preaching of the Gospel to all creation approaches its completion. This great task, which the Lord entrusted to the Church, would be still far from being accomplished, if the meaning were that before the end Christianity shall be the prevailing religion among all nations, or that the Gospel shall be known to all men individually, but the words of the Lord in Matt. 24:14 do not imply that. Rather the contrary, for He said that the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world shall be "for a testimony (witness) unto all nations." That the Gospel is preached in the whole world is rapidly becoming a fact.

> Matt. 24:14, And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all nations.

2. A great apostacy from the faith, the revealing of the man of sin, the son of perdition, 2 Thess. 2:3, the Anti-Christ, who denies the Father and the Son, 1 John 2:22, and the coming of many false Christs and false prophets who shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect, Matt. 24:24.

The name "anti-christ" occurs only in the epistles of John, and this Apostle speaks of him as still to come and also as already present: "whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already," 1 John 4:3. In so far as it was then in the world, the meaning is to point out thereby a spirit of opposition to Christ, an antichristian agitation, such as manifested itself as soon as Christianity was revealed, and in the course of time in all

movements that were directed against Christ and His Kingdom. From several Scriptural passages, however, is to be inferred that towards the end of time a definite person will appear, who will be the embodiment, the personification of that spirit. Paul calls him "the man of sin," a person in whom the sin of man has become the man of sin, 2 Thess. 2:3. He will deny that Jesus is the Christ, 1 John 62:22, he will not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, 1 John 4:3, and from this it is evident that his enmity will be definitely directed against Christ. He is further described in 2 Thess. 2. Many of the old Reformed theologians thought that papacy was to be regarded as the antichrist, but this does not agree with what Scripture testifies of him.

2 Thess. 2:3, 4, Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.

1 John 2:18, Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.

3. Wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, Matt. 24:7, 8; and immediately before His coming, awe-inspiring signs in nature, Matt. 24:29.

Matt. 24:7, 8, For nation shall arise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in diverse places. But all these things are the beginning of travail.

Matt. 24:29, But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

If we compare the conditions and events of our times with these signs, it is indeed evident that the time of the end approaches rapidly.

499. **The Manner of Christ's Second Coming.**—With respect to the manner of Christ's second coming, we are told in the Scriptures that it shall take place: a) Bodily and visibly, Acts 1:11, visible as the lightning, which is seen from one end of heaven to the other, so that no one shall have to believe if they say: Behold, here is the Christ, or Behold, he is there, but everyone shall be able to see Him, Matt. 24:26, 27; — b) With great power and glory, on the clouds of heaven, and accompanied by His holy angels, Matt. 24:30, 31.

Acts 1:11b, This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.

500. **The Purpose of Christ's Second Coming.**—The Scriptures

teach that the second coming of Christ will be to judge the quick and the dead. That is therefore its purpose. When the Lord in Matt. 24 and 25 speaks of His second coming, He places the judgment in direct connection therewith, as something which will then immediately follow. When they shall see "the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," then "shall all the tribes of the earth mourn" (24:30); "then shall two men be in the field, one is taken, and the other is left" (24:40); "then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, etc." (25:1-13); and "when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all the nations; and He shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, etc." (25:31-46). And the sentence which will then be passed will be a sentence for eternity: "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life," (25:46). The judgment represented here is therefore the last judgment.

In agreement with this the Church has confessed of old in the Apostolic Creed: "from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." In the same way the Catechism: "that He continues there (in heaven) for our interest, until He comes again to judge the quick and the dead," Qu. 46; and also the Confession of Faith: "that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare Himself judge of the quick and the dead," Art. 47.

501. **The Millennium.**—Nevertheless in different times and again in our own times there have been not a few who held that the purpose of the second coming of Christ was the establishing of a millennium, a reign of Christ upon earth of a thousand years.

The expectation of the Jews was that, after a dispensation of 2000 years before the Law and then of 2000 years under the Law, there would follow the Messianic Kingdom, and that thereafter the eternal Sabbath would begin. During those 2000 years the Messiah would reign on earth, at Jerusalem, visible among all the people, and Israel, as the most powerful and the most richly blessed of peoples, would stand at the head of all nations.

Some of the earlier and some of the later Church fathers have adopted with a few changes, this Jewish idea, and have taught that the history of the world would close with a millennial, visible reign of Christ upon earth, with Jerusalem as His capital. This would be preceded by a resurrection of the righteous, and a return of the Jews to Canaan, and these would especially share in the glory of Christ's reign. This thousand years after the preceding 6000 years

should conform to the seventh day of the week of creation after the preceding six days. After the reign of Constantine the Great this doctrine fell into the back ground, and has never been officially adopted by the Church.

In recent times, however, this doctrine of the millennium has found many supporters, and it is strongly defended. They are fairly well agreed concerning the main points, such as the twofold resurrection, a millennial reign of Christ at Jerusalem, a general apostasy at the end thereof, and then a general resurrection and judgment, but there is much difference of opinion as regards the details. As one of the contemporary presentations we give the following:

a. There shall first be a resurrection of the righteous, and these, together with the believers who shall then be alive, shall be drawn through the air where the Lord will meet them and take them unto Himself in glory (rapture). Through this the Church, as the assembly of the saints, and therefore also the Holy Spirit, will be taken from the earth, and that in a manner invisible to the world. This can take place at any moment.

b. Now follows the great oppression, and during this Israel will return to its country, the antichrist will make his appearance, and the vials of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the earth. In the midst of all this misery people are still converted and Israel as a people accepts Christ.

c. Thereafter the second coming occurs. By Him the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire, Gog and Magog are overcome, and Satan is bound for a thousand years, and those who were converted during the preceding oppression and who died in the Lord are now raised from the dead, but this resurrection is not the second but the completion of the first.

d. The millennium. Christ resides for a thousand years visibly upon earth and from Jerusalem reigns over all the nations. The external blessings of His reign are glorious in peace, prosperity and abundance, but its spiritual blessings for the Church are still more glorious, although there are and remain those who subject themselves hypocritically.

e. At the end thereof Satan is loosed for a short time; he collects the Gog and the Magog for the final conflict, but is overcome and thrown into the pit with his entire host. Then follows the second resurrection of all those who are still in the graves, and finally the last judgment.

According to this teaching the second coming of Christ will precede the millennium, and therefore it is called Premillenniarism. A few of the objections against it are:

a. That this theory, being originally a Judaistic idea, clothed in Christian garment, bears the stamp of the Jewish earthly minded

conception of the Messianic Kingdom, so that it minimizes the spiritual and heavenly character of this Kingdom. The Lord Himself has said: My Kingdom is not of this world.

b. That such a second coming of Christ and such a stay upon earth would again demand an humiliation, a laying aside of His glory; for how little the believers in this present earthly state could have communion with Him in His heavenly glory is evident from Rev. 1:17, where John tells how he fell as dead before His feet when the Lord appeared to him. And likewise it would be impossible for the righteous, who were raised up at the so-called first resurrection, to feel at home in such an earthly kingdom, as they would be entirely unsuited for this earthly life still stained by sin.

c. That the theory rests upon an in many respects arbitrary exegesis of obscure passages, especially upon Rev. 20:1-10. This passage in a book so full of symbolical language and presentations, it takes literally, whereas clear passages never speak of such a Millennium or of any of the teachings peculiar to that doctrine, but always of but one resurrection and of the second coming of Christ as a coming to judge the quick and the dead. Neither do the passages the meaning of which is clear say anything concerning a restoration and conversion of Israel as a nation. The cursing of the fig-tree with the words: "Let there be no fruit from thee henceforth, forever," Matt. 21:19, seems to indicate the contrary. In Rom. 11 Paul speaks of the salvation of all Israel, but even if this means of all the Jews then living, it is something quite different from a restoration of their nationality.

d. That the manner in which Premilleniarists speak of the Millennium testifies against the theory. The Millennium is called "the marriage of the Lamb"; for the Church it is "the star of hope"; it is meant in the encouraging words of Tit. 2:13; 1 John 3:2, 3; it is with the Millennium that the believers must comfort one another, according to 1 Thess. 4:18, etc. Almost everything that the Scriptures say concerning salvation and life eternal is applied to the Millennium. But the Scriptures nowhere comfort with a rest and peace and salvation which will at one time be enjoyed on earth. Quite the contrary. On this side of eternity it foretells for us nothing but hate, oppression, persecution on the part of the world, John 16:33. Just as the Master experienced such from the world, so will it be with the disciples, John 15:19, 20. The hope of the Church is not that of a millennium on earth, but that of life eternal, and blessed are they who die in the Lord.

502. **Postmilleniarism.**—There is still another conception of the millennium, i. e. that according to which the millennium will precede the second coming of Christ. This theory would have

Rev. 20:1-10 be interpreted more spiritually. It is true that Satan will be bound for a thousand years and that Christ will reign for a thousand years, but the governing shall be done from heaven, without bodily presence upon earth. The "first resurrection" of martyrs to reign as kings with Christ for a thousand years (v. 4), does not mean their corporeal resurrection, but the resurrection of their spirit, their spirit of love and trust and zeal and faithfulness unto death, which will again reign in the Church in an unknown measure, and in this reign of their spirit it will be they themselves who reign with Christ. The spirit of the party of Satan will, however, not be resurrected, i. e. the spirit of hate and seduction and persecution, until the millennium will have passed (v. 5), and Satan will be loosed for a short time. This millennium is thus regarded as being a period of great spiritual prosperity for the Church, but without a "rapture," without the bodily presence of Christ on earth and at Jerusalem, and without a twofold corporeal resurrection. And since according to this conception the second coming of Christ will not occur until after the millennium, it has in recent times been given the name "Postmilleniarism." According to some we have for a long time been living in the Millennium, but in that case there is a difference of opinion as to when it began. According to others, however, it is still to come, and is not to be expected until the seventh thousand years of the existence of the world. Such a conception of the millennium as a flourishing condition of the Church was not strange to some of our old Reformed theologians.

3. Resurrection and Judgment

503. **But one Resurrection.**—That there will be but one resurrection, immediately preceding the end, is taught by the Scriptures in John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:24a, and other passages. It will be a resurrection of all at the same time, righteous and wicked. Those who will then be alive will be changed in a moment and made like unto those who will then arise from the dead, 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.

> **John 5:28, 29, Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.**
>
> **1 Cor. 15:24a. Then cometh the end.**
>
> **1 Cor. 15:51, 52, Behold I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

504. **The Resurrected Body of the Believers.**—Concerning the

resurrected body of the believers the following is revealed to us in the Scriptures:

1. That it will in essence be the same body which was ours during life. Otherwise, as is correctly said, it would not be a resurrection but a new creation of bodies. It is said that each shall receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad, 2 Cor. 5:10, and it is a matter of divine justice that the body that receives that which was done, be the same as the body in which it was done. According to 1 Cor. 15:53 it will be this corruptible that will put on incorruption, and this mortal that will put on immortality. The resurrection of Christ also was and had to be a resurrection of the same body, still recognizable in the marks of the nails in hands and feet and the wound in His side, Luke 24:39. This does not mean that it will have to consist of entirely the same material components. Not that this would be impossible with God, but because it is not necessary, since that which constitutes the essence of our bodies does not lie in the material components. As far as it concerns material components our bodies are said to be changed to other bodies every seven years, but this does not take away the fact that throughout our lives we regard our bodies as remaining identically the same. In 1 Cor. 15:42, 43 Scripture compares the resurrection to the sprouting forth of a plant with its fruit from a seed. The old body is not resurrected exactly as it was, but it is the seed of the new body. More the Scriptures do not reveal concerning it, and many questions which might be put here must remain unanswered.

2. That it will be a body clothed in glory and honor, with immortality and power, not a natural but a spiritual body, 1 Cor. 15:42-44. It will thus be entirely free from such imperfections and blemishes as it may have now. If we are to conclude from this that little children will be raised as adults for the reason that the immature state is a state of imperfection, we leave an open question. Rev. 20:12, and I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, does not prove the contrary, for if we take this passage as meaning that those standing before the throne were partly great and partly small persons, we would also have to take it as meaning that they all were dead persons.

The fact that it will be a spiritual body implies that it will be a body, a material body, not, however, a natural but a spiritual body, not a body which is bound to conditions of time and place the way our natural body is, but a body that will be free from these limitations and at the unimpeded disposal of our spirit. A material body, but not of flesh and blood, 1 Cor. 15:50; a material body, but with spiritual instead of natural characteristics.

1 Cor. 15:42-44, So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is

raised n glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Cor. 15:50, Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

3. That in the resurrected bodies there will be no difference of sex, Matt. 22:30, and they will have no need of food, nor will they have digestive organs, 1 Cor. 6:13a.

Matt. 22:30, For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven.

1 Cor. 6:13a. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall bring to nought both it and them.

505. **The Resurrected Bodies of the Wicked.**—Of the resurrected bodies of the wicked Scriptures say very little. "They shall be an abhorring unto the flesh," Is. 66:24, and shall awake "to shame and everlasting contempt," Daniel 12:2. Hence for them it will be the very opposite of being raised in glory and honor. They will, however, be raised in immortality and power in order that they may bear in body and soul the wrath of God for all eternity. This immortality and power, even as the resurrection itself, will be a curse unto them.

THE JUDGMENT

506. **Who will be the Judge.**—In the judgment Christ will be the judge. The Father "hath given all judgment unto the Son," John 5:22, and that because "He is a Son of man," John 5:27. As the Son of man, who in all things was made like unto his brethren, who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," since He "hath been in all points tempted like as we, yet without sin," Hebr. 4:15, He is not only completely able to judge righteously, but is also for man the most desirable judge. Furthermore the judgment is given Him, in order that He, who became the Son of man, and as such was humiliated so deeply that each one could maltreat Him and go unpunished, for that reason should be highly exalted, Phil. 2:17. In the Judgment in which each one shall see his fate in His hands so that He shall decide concerning it sovereignly, it will be evident how high He is exalted above man and the angels. The second coming is the last and highest degree of exaltation.

The saints will also be judges. They will judge the world and even the angels, 1 Cor. 6:2, 3, but in what manner this will be done we are not told; as associates perhaps. The apostles were told by the Lord that they would "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Matt. 19:28.

507. **Who will be Judged.**—Those who will be judged are:

1. All men. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ," the Apostle Paul says, 2 Cor. 5:10. Hence the believers also. Those who have faithfully made gains with their talents as well as wicked and slothful servants, Matt. 25: 20, 21, 26; those who are at His right hand as well as those who are at His left hand, Matt. 25:34-46. For the judgment will be a benefit to the believers. It will, by revealing everything and placing everything in the right light, show plainly how much better they were, through God's grace, in spite of all weakness and imperfection, than the world considered them to be and than the world itself was. Thus the judgment will justify them before the world. According to Matt. 25:31 ff. the believers will be judged first, very likely that they may take part as associates in the judgment of the wicked.

2. The angels, especially the fallen angels, 2 Peter 2:4.

> 2 Pet. 2:4, For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

508. **The Judgment Itself.**—The judgment shall consist of a threefold act:

1. Each one will be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; so that his entire life, internal and external, shall be laid bare in detail, Rev. 20:12; Matt. 12:36; 1 Cor. 4:5.

> Rev. 20:12, And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.
>
> Matt. 12:36, And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.
>
> 1 Cor. 4:5, Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God.

2. Thereafter the sentence will be passed, Matt. 25:34 ff. This sentence will be for each one "according to his works," "according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Especially in regard to their relation to the Gospel, and thereby to Christ, whether that was a relation of belief or unbelief, Mark 16:16. Those that are found to be in Christ will be judged according to the justice of the Covenant of Grace, according to the measure received; but those that will be found to have rejected Christ will be judged according to the justice of the Covenant of Works, according to the stern justice of the Law, according to what God can demand of man whom He has created in His image. Of those who have believed some will receive a reward of ten cities, others

one of five cities, Luk. 19:17, and of those who have not believed some will receive many stripes, and others few stripes, Luke 12:47 ff.

> Mark 16:16, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.

3. Finally the excution of the sentence, Matt. 25:46, consisting in the entering in of the righteous into life eternal, and the rejection of the wicked in outer darkness.

4. Eternal Life and Eternal Death

509. **Heaven a Place.**—Heaven is a place. We read expressly of a creation of heaven, Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6, as well as of the earth. Heaven is ever spoken of as a place, as the dwelling place, the throne, the paradise of God, where He reveals His glory, where the angels are and where they see the face of the Father, serve Him day and night in His temple, and from which the wicked will be excluded. The resurrection of the dead demands a place for those raised to dwell, a place for the saved as well as a place for the lost.

510. **The Bliss of Heaven.**—Concerning the bliss of heaven the revelation in the Scriptures is negative rather than positive; it says more plainly that it will bring deliverance from all affliction, Rev. 7:16, 17; 22:5, than what the nature of the enjoyment will be; we can more easily understand the former than the latter. Of the glory and bliss it speaks as of something that is not yet made manifest, 1 John 3:2.

On the grounds of Scriture we can, however, say, although we can by no means conceive what it includes, that the bliss shall consist in:

1. Primarily and chiefly in knowing and enjoying God, John 17:3. To learn to know God in the infinite glory and richness of His virtues, cannot but be an eternal source of the highest enjoyment.

2. The glory, Rom. 2:10, holiness, Rev. 7:9, and perfection, 1 Cor. 13:10, with which the saved will see themselves clothed, and which will be so great that the redeemed Church, as His body will be to the glory of Christ, its glorified Head, and as the temple of God the worthy dwelling place of the Most High.

3. The enjoyment of the glory and the fullness of the new heaven and the new earth, and of the communion of the saints and angels. There will be a perfect communion of the saints. If this earth is already so full of astounding creative wonders, what then will that new earth be?

Rev. 7:16, 17, They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.

Rev. 21:4, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more; the first things are passed away.

1 John 3:2, Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is.

John 17:3, And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.

511. **Also Bodily Enjoyment.**—That there will also be bodily enjoyment follows from the resurrection of the body. Just in enjoyment in body and soul will the bliss be perfect, and the saved will not only inherit heaven, but also the earth. The Scriptures especially make mention repeatedly of music and song in heaven, Rev. 14:2, 3, and other passages.

ETERNAL DEATH

512. **Hell also a Place.**—When the Scripture speaks of hell, it does not mean a condition merely, but an actual place, a place without the Kingdom of glory, Rev. 22:15, a place for those "thrown out," Matt. 8:12, where "outer darkness" reigns, Matt. 22:13, where persons with a material body can dwell. Where this place is, is not revealed unto us. There are indications that it is "below," but "below" is for us, here on this revolving earth, a relative term. If the universe has an above and a below, we do not know where they are.

513. **A "Lake of Fire."**—Whether or not we are to take such expressions as "a lake of fire," "unquenchable fire" literally, is a question concerning which different opinions are held. This is however certain that, if we are not to interpret fire in the natural sense but in the sense of the fire of God's wrath, Hebr. 12:29, the reality will be no less fearful.

514. **The Sufferings of Hell.**—We have no more conception of the sufferings of hell than we have of the bliss of heaven. Scriptures mention a few things which will belong to it, but we cannot conceive of the indescribable woe which is therein expressed.

This suffering will consist:

1. In the curse, i. e. in being banished from communion with God and being deprived of all good, of which God is the source, for which man was destined, and for which he hungers and thirsts. The divine sentence will be: Depart from Me, ye cursed, Matt. 25:41.

2. In all the misery of eternal death, which is the wages of sin, Rom. 6:23, and to sink away into this will be sinking helplessly away into destruction, into perdition and ruin, for that is death. Thus, not only in being deprived of all good, but also in being made the object of all evil; not only in being banished from God's saving communion, but also in being condemned to the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels.

3. In physical pain, the "eternal pain," and in agony and despair of the soul, as is expressed in "weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. 8:12. It will all be wretchedness and doom there, and no hope.

515. **The Punishment Endless.**—The punishment will be endless, even as the bliss will be endless, Matt. 25:46. The Lord Jesus Himself, who was so full of mercy and compassion, has repeatedly said this with emphasis, and let no one think that he feels the fearfulness of an endless punishment more, or is more filled with pity, than He. Sin is the highest evil, which demands the highest punishment, i. e. an infinite punishment; and the lost will continue to make themselves worthy of punishment (Cf. §§170, 171).

516. **The Renewing of the World.**—After the judgment the earth will not be annihilated, but restored, Rev. 1:5. The Scriptures speak of it as a "regeneration," Matt. 19:28, as "a restoration of all things," Acts 3:21, and the saved shall inherit heaven not only, but also the earth, Matt. 5:5. "According to His promises," wrote the Apostle Peter, "we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Peter 3:13.

Concerning the manner in which this will be done, the same Apostle tells us that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" and also that "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," 2 Peter 3:10, 12.

Thus the entire "creation, now subject to vanity, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, Rom. 8:19-22; and the vegetable and animal kingdoms will share therein, Is. 11:6f., 65:21 f. The new Jerusalem, which is now above, and which indicates the city where God dwells with His people, will then descend to the earth, Rev. 21:2. And in that new Jerusalem there is no sin, no sickness, and no death; death is swallowed up in victory, and thrown into the lake of fire; and in the material world, too, there reign power, glory, and immortality, 1 Cor. 13:42 f.; Rev. 7:16, 17; 21:4, as a manifestation and fruit of the eternal, holy, and blissful life, which all citizens share in the communion of God" (Bavinck).

INDEX

(The numbers indicate paragraphs)

Adam. Progenitor and Covenant head, 146. Probation and fall, 148ff. Imputation of his sin to his descendants, 156. This imputation immediate, 160ff.

Adoration, 479.

Adultery, 475.

Almsgiving in public worship, 303.

Amen, 489.

Anabaptists. The incarnation of Christ, 223. Regeneration, 376.

Angels. Creation of the —, 117, Good —, 118, Origin of sin among the —, 119. Satan, the devils, and their power, 120.

Anointment. The name Christ, 198. The rite of anointing and the — of Christ, 199.

Antichrist, 498.

Antinomians. Rejection of the Law and of sanctification, 142, 360, 466. Disparagement of the work of the Holy Spirit, 260. Regeneration, 376. Justification from eternity, 450. Good works, 456.

Apostles. Office of the —; marks of apostleship, 278.

Application of grace, 352ff. The work of the Holy Spirit, 358. Necessity, 359. Denial of our need of —, 360, 361. Accomplished in accordance with our being persons, 361, 363, 383. Supra and infra in regard to the —, 362.

Appropriation of grace by faith. Necessity of the —, 402, 423, 424. The necessity of this "saving act of faith" to be emphasized, 419, 362. The Sacraments and —, 327, 328, 347.

Arius and Arians, 45, 87.

Arminius, 103.

Arminians. Predestination and Gospel, 320, 321. Universal Atonement, 211, 319, 320. Denial of the perseverance of the saints, 465, and of the assurance of faith, 437.

Ascension of Christ, 230.

Assent of faith, 422.

Assurance of faith, 430ff. Saving faith and the —, 430. Only reliable ground for —, 431. Self-examination, 432. Marks of grace, 433ff. Fruit and comfort of election, 437. Importance of the —, 438. Word and Sacraments and the —, 306, 310.

Atonement. The — particular, not universal, 210. Particular — and Christ's "bearing the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind" Cat., Qu. 37), 211. Particular — and a universal Gospel, 211.

Attributes. The — of God, 52ff. Incommunicable —, 57, 58. Communicable —, 59-80. Personal — of the Trinity, 86.

Attributes of the Decree, 95. Of Scripture, 30. Of the Church, 263.

Authority. The — of Scripture, 30. Of the Church Order, 285. All human — given of God; maintained by the fifth Commandment; fundamental significance of parental —; the revolutionary spirit and New Pedagogy, 473.

Autonomy of the local Church and its limits, 290.

Baptism. Benefits sealed by —, especially remission of sin and ingraftment into Christ, 330, 331. To whom, 332. As in what sense their own, 333. To baptize "into the Name," 330. Working of —, 337; Supra view, 362. — obliging to confession of faith and to participation of the Lord's Supper, 353. Immersion or sprinkling, 342. The — of John, 343. Members by —,

see Church membership.
————. Infant Baptism, 334-341. The ground for —, 241,255,334. Whether — can be of subjective benefit for infants, 335. Its great value, 336 — on the ground of supposed regeneration, 337, 340. The Baptismal questions, 338. — of children of members by Baptism, 339. Baptistic arguments against —, 340, 341.
Baptismal Form. Three parts of the doctrine of Baptism, 330. Interpretation of the Covenant promise, 247, 330. Concerning the parties of the Covenant, 236, 254, 332. Concerning the benefits that are sealed, 247, 330, 331, 332, to whom they are sealed, 332, 333; in what sense as theirs, 246, 247, 333. Concerning objectivity of Covenant and Baptism, 332. Concerning presentation for Baptism through members by Baptism, 338. Thanksgiving prayer of the —, 331.
Baptists. Origin, 340. Rejection of infant Baptism, 340, 341. Immersion, 342. Church Polity, 6.
Benediction in public worship, 303.
Bible. The — the Word of God, 19, 20. Books of the —, 37. See further Holy Scripture.
Burial of Christ, 226.

Cain. God's speaking to and warning of reprobates as — and Jeroboam, also Jerusalem, 233, 321.
Call to an office in the Church, 287.
Calling to salvation, 367ff. The external — and the Gospel, 317. Well-meaning for all, 318, 368. Meaning of "calling" by Paul, 372, 386.
Calvin and the significance of Gen. 17 for the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace and the relation between this Covenant and the Church, 254. On the meaning of the Sacraments, 243.
Canons of Dordrecht. Origin, 43. Salvation of Covenant children dying in infancy, 241. The well-meaningness of the Gospel and the external calling, 318. Regeneration, 375, 386. Assurance of faith and the perseverance of the saints, 437.
Capital punishment, 474.
Catechism. The Heidelberg —. Origin, 42. Covenant of Grace. 237. Parties of the Covenant, 244, 254. The promise of the Covenant also that of the Gospel, 249. Implanting into Christ in virtue of the Covenant, 255. The working of the Sacraments, 327. The wrath of God against the sins of all mankind sustained by Christ, 211. Working of Baptism, 338. Faith, 412, 415, 418, 421. Marks of grace, 434, 435. Assurance of faith, 437. The oath, 471. Interpretation of the Ten Commandments, 468ff.; and of the Lord's Prayer, 480, 483ff.
————. The Westminster —. The Covenant of Grace, 254. The Word as means of grace, 311.
Catholicity of the Church, 263. The Church of Rome not catholic, 263.
Censure, 296.
Chance, 469. Games of —, 469.
Children of believers are members of the Covenant as well as adult believers, 236, 241, 243, 244, 255, 332. Salvation of — dying in infancy, 241, 255, 383. Roman doctrine of a "limbus infantum," 492.
Christ. The name Christ, 198ff. See farther Mediator.
Christian Churches. Principal groups of —, 5.
"Christian Science," 87.
Church. The —, 258ff. Distinctions, 259. The circles of Visible and Invisible Church, 260.
The Visible Church. The — and the Covenant of Grace, 233, 234, 257. The — essentially the body of Christ, practically an institution of salvation, 261. Organism and institution, 262. Attributes, 263. Marks, 264. False Churches, 265. Disunion, 266. Obligation to belong to the —, 267. The — and social conditions, 304. The — and Missions, 305.
Church Assemblies, 289. Consistories, 290. Major —, 291.
Church Discipline, 292ff. Duty of the Church to maintain —, 292.

Character and purpose, 293. — with respect of secret sins, 294. — with respect to sins of a public charater, 295. Means of —, 296. Duty of the Congregation towards those who are under discipline, 297. Removal of members without excommunication, 298. In case of resignation of membership, 299. In regard to members by Baptism, 300. Membership of Secret Societies, 301.

Church Membership, 268ff. 1. Who are members of the Visible Church, 268. Making confession of faith, 269ff., see the Art. 2. Membership by Baptism, 236, 241, 243, 244, 255, 332. Church Discipline, 300. Presentation for Baptism, 338, 339. Obligation to belong to the Church, 267. Maturity rights of confessing members, 282.

Church Offices, 278ff.

Church Polity and Government. Systems of —, 281. Principles of —, 282, 283.

Church Power, 279, 280, 284, 285, 286.

Circumcision, 243, 254, 329. Replaced by Baptism, 341.

Collection. The — in public worship, 303. At Communion service, 357.

Collegialism, 299.

Comfort of Providence, 130; of election, 212, 405, 437.

Communism, 476.

Communion Form. Differentation between "giving" and "making partakers" through faith, 417. Conception of saving faith, 418.

Compendium of the Christian Religion. Origin, 44. Conception of saving faith, 415, 418. Treasures of the Church, 257. Manual for examination of those who wish to make confession of faith, 270.

Confessional Standards. The — and the Doctrine of Faith, 1, 38. Significance of —, 39. Our —, 40ff. The — and the doctrine of the Covenant of Works, 144. Regeneration, 375. The supra and infra question, 108.

Confession of faith, 269ff. What it includes, 269, 271. Different conceptions, 270. Questions to be asked in public service, 270, 271. Age, 273. Relation to Covenant, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, 272, 353. Treatment of those who fail to make —, 274, 353. Wrong terminology, 275. Must be judged according to the objective measure of confession and life; no judging of the heart, 273.

Confession of Faith (The "Belgic" —). Origin, 41. Regeneration, 375. The "Apostolic" —, 45, 224. The — of Nicaea, 45, 227. The — of Athanasius, 45, 227.

Conclusions of Utrect. The supra and infra question, 110. Supposed regeneration as ground for Baptism, 337. Mediate or immediate regeneration, 387. Justification from eternity, 451.

Concurrence. Meaning, 126. Difficulty involved, 127.

Conditional immortality, 496.

Confirmation. Public confession of faith no —, 275.

Congregationalists, 6. System of Church government, 281. Autonomy of the local Churches, 290.

Conscience, 461.

Consistories, 290.

Consummation of the world, 490. The doctrine of the — a fruit of prophecy, 490.

Conversion, 390ff. What is meant by —, 390. Author of —, 391. Ground for the demand of —, 392. Difference in manner of —, 393, 394. Conspicuousness of a — no guarantee for genuineness, 395.

Covenant. God's covenant way of ruling men, 139. Three Covenants, 111.

Covenant of Grace, 235ff. The — and election, 102, 254. To be distinguished from the Covenant of Redemption, 236. Definition of the —, 237. The dispensation of grace in the form of a covenant, 237, 238, 255. A testament, 239. Characteristics: onesided, 241; unbreakable, 242; unconditional, 243. Parties, 236, 244, 255, 332. Treasures, 245. Possession of these treasures, 246, 247. Subjective convenantal grace, 248. The — and the Gospel, 249. Purpose, 250. Objectivity, 250.

Identity under Old and New Testaments. The — and the Covenant of Works, 147. Identification of — and Covenant of Redemption by Scholastic Theology, 254, and its consequences, 255. Erroneous distinction between internal and external Covenant, 255, 256. The — and the Visible Church, 233, 234, 257. The — and the Means of Grace, 306. The — the ground for infant Baptism, 241, 255, 334. Conception of the Baptists, 340. Covenant breaking, 242. Implanting into Christ as member of the —, 381. Covenant membership, 236, 244, 255, 332. Supra view of the —, 362.

Covenant of Redemption, 111, 112, 113. Differing from the Covenant of Grace as to purpose, 234, 236, 4; parties, 236, 244; time of having been established, 236; and character, 236. Indentification of the two and its consequences, 254, 255.

Covenant of Works, 139ff. Contents, 140. Purpose, 141. A new significance of the duty of obedience, 142. Onesided, 143. The Confessional Standards making no mention of it, 144. Scriptural proof, 145. Significance of the — for the promise of life, for the immediate imputation of Adam's sin, for the work of redemption, 146; for justification, 445. The Covenant of Grace compared with the —, 147.

Creationism, 137.

Creation, 114ff.

Cross. Death on the —, 225.

Deaconship, 286.

Death, 164ff. The punishment of sin, even its natural consequence, 164. What — is, 165. Corporal —, 166. Spiritual —, 167. Eternal —, 168, 512. Eternal — everlasting, 169, 496, 515.

Death of the Mediator, 225.

Decree. The — of God in general, 94ff. Attributes, 95. The — and man's moral freedom and responsibility; the — and hearing of prayer, 96. The — and Predestination, 98.

Deism, 129.

Descent into hell, 227.

Depravity. Total — of man by nature, 174, 175.

Determinism, 96.

Devils. Fall of the —, 119. Their power in the world, 120.

Dichotomy, 136.

Difficulties regarding some of the revealed truths. The distinction of two wills in God, 64, 65. The divine decree, 96; predestination, concurrence in Providence, 127, and man's responsibility. The sovereignty of God, and man's being a free, rational, moral agent, a second cause, 361. Particular atonement and a general offer of grace, 321. The unchangeableness of the decree, the certainty of its execution and hearing of prayer, 96, 482.

Dispensation of Grace, 233ff. Has its ground in God's dealing with man as a person, 233. Dates from Paradise, 155, 238. The Covenant of Grace its covenantal form, 238.

Divinity of Christ. Proofs, 188, 193. Necessity for the work of redemption, 194.

Divorce allowed only in case of adultery, 475.

Doctrine and life not to be separated from one another, 421.

Doctrine of Faith. What is meant by —, 1. Contents and task, 2. — and Confessional Standards, 1, 38. Division, 47.

Dupleuric character of the Covenant of Redemption, 41. The dupleuric conception of the Covenant of Grace erroneous, 254. None of the Covenants made with men was dupleuric, 241.

Ecumenical Creeds, 45.

Eldership, 278, 281, 284.

Election to salvation. To be in Christ in virtue of —, 381. Does not include actual justification, 450, 451. — and perseverance of the saints, 465. — and assurance of faith, 437. See farther Predestination.

Election for a Church office, 288.

Emotional experiences and temporal faith, 402. Emotions and faith, 439.

Episcopal. — Church, 6. — system of Church Polity, 281, 283.
Essence of God, 78ff.
Eternal Death, 512ff. Hell a place, 512. A "lake of fire," 513. Sufferings of hell, 514. The punishment endless, 169, 496, 515.
Eternal Life, 509ff. Heaven also a place, 509. The bliss of heaven, 510, 511.
Eternity. The — of God, 58. The — of the Decree.
Evangelists, 278.
Evolution. The theory of —, 123. Its pernicious implications, 124. A modified theory of —, 125.
Exaltation. The State of — of the Mediator and its degrees, 228.
Excommunication, 296.
Experiential tendency, 255, 270, 321, 322, 436.

Faith, see Historical, Temporal, Miraculous, Saving Faith.
Falling from grace. No —, 465. See Perseverance of the saints.
False Mysticism. Valuation of Scripture, 33, 34. Its dangers, 35. — and the marks of grace, 434.
Fatalism, 96.
Fate, 469.
Father. Name of the first Person of the Trinity, 51. The address in the Lord's prayer, 485.
Feastdays. Christian —, 460.
Fifth Commandment, 473.
First Commandment, 469.
Forms. Forms of Unity, 39, see Confessional Standards, Liturgical —, 46.
Formulary Prayers, 484.
Fortune, 469.
Fourth Commandment, 472.
Free ballot for choosing Church Officers, 288.
Freedom. The — of the divine Decrees, 95. Moral — of man, 96, 176.

Games of chance, 469.
Generation of God the Son, 90.
Gethsemane. The suffering in —, 227.
God. The Doctrine of God, Part I, 48ff. Can be known only through revelation of Himself, 8. Twofold revelation, 8, 9. Knowledge of God from nature, 10ff. The existence of God an object of faith, 16. Rational arguments and their value, 15. See farther: Names, Essence, Attributes, Works of God.
Goodness of God, 67.
Good Works. The — of no value for justification, 488, but of value for sanctification, 455. How defective works of believers can be "good" in the sight of God, 456. Which are —, 457. Faith the source, 458. The glory of God the purpose, 459. The law of God the rule, 460; not conscience, 461. Value of —, 462. Reward of —, 463.
Gospel. What the — is, 316. Well-meaningness for all of its offer of grace, 233, 316. The — and the external calling, 317. This no doctrine of universal atonement, 318. The Canons of Dordrecht on this point, 318. Denial of this character of the —, 320; reasons therefore, 321; consequence thereof, 322. This objectivity of the — to the benefit of the elect, 323. Sealing of the — as of such a character by the Lord's Supper, 348. The Gospel and particular atonement, 211, 213.
Government of God, 126.
Grace of God, 68. Common —, 69, 70, 71, 382. God's righteousness in the sphere of grace, 75, 456.
Guilt of sin, 158. Imputation of the —, 161-163.

Heidelberg Catechism, see Catechism.
Heir. The Mediator — in the Covenant of Redemption, 112, 236. The believers and their seed heirs in the Covenant of Grace, 239, 246.
Hell, 491, 492.
Hierarchy, 281, 283.
Historical faith, 397-401.
Holiness. The — of God, 72. The — of the Church, 263. Church Discipline, 293.
Holy Spirit. Personality of the —, 89. Personal attributes, 86. His work in the sphere of grace, 358; necessity, 359; and denial of that work, 360, 361. Indwelling of the —, 454. The — and Scripture, 32, 33, 34.

Honor of God the purpose of creation, 121; of good works, 459; Discipline, 293.
Human nature of the Mediator, see Person of the Mediator.
Human race. Unity of the —, 138. The — and Adam's sin, 156.

Idolatry. First Commandment, 469, 470.
Image of God. Man created in the —, 132. The angels and the —, 118, 132.
Image worship. Second Commandment, 470.
Immutability. The — of God, 58. The — of the Decree, 96.
Impartment of Salvation. The — twofold, 246, 333. Objectively through the "giving" of the Covenant and Gospel, 237, 238, 245, 246, 247, 249, 417, 418; subjectively through the application of the Holy Spirit, 246, 258ff., 424, 425.
Implanting into Christ, 380-383.
Impotence. Spiritual —, 173. — and regeneration, 178. Command of faith, 427, and conversion, 392.
Imputation of Adam's sin, 146, 156, 160, 161, 163.
Incarnation of the Mediator, 223.
Independency of God, 58.
Independent system of Church Polity, 281, 283.
Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, 454. The — and sanctification, 454.
Infallibility of Scripture, 30.
Infant Baptism, 334-342. — and one-sidedness of the Covenant, 241. — and objectivity of the Covenant, 255.
Infra and Supra question, 106-110. Practical significance, 109, 362; Regeneration, 384-389; justification, 450, 451.
Ingraftment into Christ. The — and regeneration, 380. The — in virtue of election, of the Covenant, by faith, 381. The — by faith necessary, 382, and not something contradictory, 383. The — in virtue of the Covenant sealed by Baptism, 331. The — by faith and regeneration, 454.
Inspiration of Scripture, 21-29.
Institution and organism of the Church, 262.
Intermediate state of the soul, 491-496.

Jeroboam, see Cain.
Jerusalem, see Cain.
Jesus. The name —, 196.
Justification, 440-451. — from eternity, 362, 450, 451; and a Covenant of Grace from eternity, 254.
Judgment. Final —, 500, 501, 506-508. To eat and drink judgment unto oneself, 350.

Kingdom of Christ, 216.
Kingly Office of Christ, 214, 215, 217, 218.
Knowledge of God, see Omniscience.
Knowledge of God. Human —, 7, 8, 9. From nature, 10-17. From Scripture, 17, 18.
Knowledge of our misery. Necessity of —, 180, 181, 315, 434. The Law and —, 312-314.

Labadism, 260.
Law of God. Twofold destination in Paradise, 142; also a twofold destination for us as means of grace, 142, 312-315. Satisfaction to the — absolutely required, 182-184; accomplished by Christ, 209; in what sense the believers are freed from the — thereby, and in what sense not, 142, 456. The — as means of grace, 312-315. The Ten Commandments, 468-478.
Letters of dismission, 277.
Limbus patrum and limbus infantum, 492.
Liturgical Forms, 46.
Lord's Supper, 344-357. Significance, 344-346. How to partake of it, 347. Unworthy partaking, 350. Seal of the Covenant promise, 348. Its blessing, 349. Self-examination, 351, 352. Who are under obligation to partake of —, 353. Manner of administration, 354, 356. Collection, 357.
Lot. Profane use of the —, 469.
Love of God, 67. Towards the world, 122. Towards sinners, 233, 321.
Lutheran Church, 6. Church Polity, 281, 283. Communication of prop-

erties, 192. The ascension of Christ, 230. Consubstantiation, 346. The Church, 261. Descent into hell, 227.

Man. The doctrine of —, Part II, 131ff.
Major Church Assemblies, 291.
Marks. — of the Church, 264, 265. — of grace, 433-435.
Means of Grace in general, 306-310; the Word of God, 311; the Law, 312-315; the Gospel, 316-323; the Sacraments, 324-329; Baptism, 330-349; Lord's Supper, 344-357.
Mediator. The Doctrine of the —, Part III. Person, 188-194; Names, 195-200; Offices, 201-218; States of the —, 219-232.
Membership of the Church, see Church membership. — of Secret Societies, 301.
Militant. The Church Militant, 259.
Millenium, 501, 502.
Ministry of the Word, 280.
Ministers of the Word, 278.
Miraculous faith, 407-409.
Misery of man through sin, 172-181, 312-315.
Modernists, 87.
Monopleuric. The Covenant of Works, 143. The Covenant of Grace, 239, 241.
Moral Freedom of man, 139, 176. — and God's Decree, 96. — and concurrence, 127.
Mormons, 87.
Mother Promise, 155, 238.
Murder. Sixth Commandment, 474.
Mysticism. False —, see False Mysticism.

Names of God, 49-51, 86. Taking the — in vain, Third Commandment, 471. Names of the Mediator, 195-200.
Name. To baptize "into the Name," 332.
Natures of the Mediator, see Person of the Mediator, 188-194.
Neo-Malthusianism, 474.
Ninth Commandment, 477.

Oath. The — and the use of it, 471.
Obedience. — required in the Covenant of Works, 140, 141, 142. The fact that perfect — entitles to eternal life, 146. This fact and the merits of the Mediator, 146, 444. Active and passive — of Christ, 210, 444.
Objectivity. The — of the Covenant of Grace, 250; results of its denial, 255. The — of the Gospel, 323; results of its denial, 322, 436. The — of Baptism, 328, 332; results of denial, 337, 340, 362; and of the Lord's Supper, 328, 347, 348. The — of Church membership, 276.
Oeconomy of the Trinity, 86.
Offices of the Mediator, 201-218. Meaning of an office, 201, 202. See farther Prophetic, Priestly, Kingly Office. Church Offices, 278.
Omnipotence of God, 77.
Omnipresence of God, 58.
Omniscience of God, 60.
One-sided, see Monopleuric.
Order of salvation, 365. Benefits belonging to the —, 365, 366. See farther Calling, Regeneration, Conversion, Faith, Justification, Sanctification.
Organism and Institution of the Church, 262.
Original sin, 157-163.

Pantheism, 129.
Paradise. Man's task in —, 135. The third heaven, 491.
Parental authority. Third Commandment, 471.
Pelagianism. State of integrity, 136. Original sin, 179. Spiritual impotence, 173. Predestination, 103. Work of the Holy Spirit, 360. Regeneration, 379. Falling from grace, 465.
People's Church, 260, 261, 355.
Perfectionism, 466.
Perseverance of the saints, 465. The — and election, 437. The — and assurance of faith, 437.
Person. The Persons in the Trinity, 84, 85, 86. The — of the Mediator, 188-194. Man created as a person, 132, and treated by God as such, 139, 141, 233, 361, 363, 382, 280. Tendency of the supra view, 362.
Personality of the Holy Spirit, 89.
Pietism, 260, 270, 395. Pietistic sub-

jectivism, 432, 434, 436, fostered by the Scholastic conceptions of the Covenant, 255, of the Gospel, 320.
Pollution of sin, 159, 163.
Postmilleniarism, 502.
Prayer, 479-489. Prayer, 479. Necessity of —, 480. Requirements of acceptable —, 481. Hearing of —, 96, 482. Contents of —, 483.
The Lord's Prayer, 484-489. Why it was given, 484. The address, 485. The first three petitions, 486. The last three petitions, 487. Doxological conclusion, 488. The concluding word "Amen," 489.
Formulary Prayers, 484.
Preaching in public worship, 303.
Predestination, 97-110. — and the necessity of regeneration, 177, 376. — and the assurance of faith, 437. — and the perseverance of the saints, 437, 465. — and the vicarious work of the Mediator, 212.
Preëxistentianism, 137.
Premilleniarism, 501.
Preparatory grace, 377.
Preparatory sermon, 355.
Presbyterian Church, 6.
Preservation of all things, 126.
Priestly office of the Mediator, 206-212.
Probationary Command, 148-151.
Procession of the Holy Spirit, see Spiration, 90.
Promise of the Covenant, 245. Interpretation of the Baptismal Form, 247. The — and the Gospel, 249, 330. Is the essence of the Covenant, 237. Sealed by Baptism, 330, by the Lord's Supper, 348.
Property. Personal —. The Eighth Commandment, 476.
Prophet. What a — is, 203. Prophets of the N. T. Dispensation, 278.
Prophetical Office of Christ, 203-205.
Providence of God, 125-130.
Public worship, 302, 303.
Punishment of sin, 164-171, 512-515, 495.
Purgatory, 492.
Puritans. Conception of the Covenant of grace, 340.

Questions for public confession of faith, 270, 271. Baptismal questions, 338.

Rationalistic interpretations to harmonize secret and revealed things, 254, 321, 322, 361.
Realm of the dead. The idea of a —, 224, 493.
Redemption. Possibility of —, 182.
Reformed Doctrine of Faith, see Doctrine of Faith.
Regeneration, 373-389. Twofold sense, 373. Conception of the Reformers, 374. Use of the word — in Scripture, 374. Subsequent conception of Scholastic Theology, 375. This later conception not to be preferred, 375. Not a creation of a new person, 376. Whether it is a momentary act, 377. Whether a person is conscious of it when he is being regenerated, 378. — and predestination, 379. — and the internal calling, 372. — enabling to sanctification, 178, 454. — and ingraftment into Christ, 380. Different senses of being in Christ, 381. Mediate or immediate —, 384, 385, 386. Resolutions of Utrecht, 387. Dormant —, 388. Practical objections, 389. Supposed — and infant Baptism, 337.
Religion. True —, 3.
Religions. False —, 4. Principal groups of false —, 5.
Repenting with God, 79, 80.
Resignation of Church membership, 299.
Responsibility of man, 361.
Resurrection of Christ, 229. The — at the last day, 503-505.
Revelation of God, 8, 9, 18.
Righteousness of God, 73-76. The — in the sphere of grace, 75, 456. The — and His love, 76.
Ruling Office, see Eldership.
Ruling power of the Church, 284.
Russellites. The Trinity, 87. Punishment of sin, 169. Conditional immortality, 496.

Sabbath. Fourth Commandment, 472. See Sunday.
Sacraments. Are Means of Grace, 307. Definition, 324. Characteristics, 325. The — of the R. C. Church, 325. Are signs and seals, 326. Working, 327. Strengthening of faith, 328. Number, 329. See

farther Baptism, the Lord's Supper.
Sanctification, 452-489. Definition, 452. Author, 453. Benefits through which the believers are enabled to —, 454. — and good works, see good works. Progress and retrogression in —, 464. No falling from grace, 465. No perfection in this life, 466. Consummation of —, 467. — and faith, 458. — and the Law, 457, 460, 461, 468-478. — and prayer, 479-489. — and justification, 447.
Satan. Fall of —, 119. Power of —, 120. Temptation of — in Paradise, 152, 153.
Satisfaction. Condition for redemption, 182, 183. Demands of —, 184. By whom alone possible, 184, 185. — and the Person, 194, offices, 218, and states, 221 of the Mediator. Only for the elect, 210, 212. No universal —, 211.
Saving Faith, 410-439. Definition, 410. Believing and seeing, 411. Believing and knowing, 412. What must be believed, 413, 427; the Catechism; that salvation has been "given," 415-418. — a living faith; its works; these works not — itself, 414. Faculty and act of faith; the "saving act" of faith, 381, 419. Knowledge, assent, and trust, 420-423. The great number of benefits attached by Scripture to —, 425. Author of —, 426. Command to believe, and in regard to this command, as a command of God and of grace, spiritual, impotence of no consequence, 427, not a command that concerns young children also, 382, 419. Unbelief the real cause of the sinner's perdition, 428. Working and strengthening of — through the Word, 250, 309, and the Sacraments, 310, 327, 332, 337, 348, 349. Assurance of —, see Assurance. — and regeneration, 374. — and justification, 446. — and good works, 458. — and the sealing through the Holy Spirit, 375. — and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, 347. — and the assured possession of the benefits of grace, 375, 424. Strong and weak —, 429. — and emotional life, 439.
Scripture. Holy —. A special revelation, 8, 18. Inspiration, 21-29. Characteristics, 30. Value, 31. — and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, 32-35. A testament, 36. As book, 37.
Scholastic Theology, 254.
Schools. Maintenance of —, 472.
Sealing by the Holy Spirit, 375.
Second coming of Christ, 232, 497-502.
Second Commandment, 470.
Second Probation, 495.
Secret Societies. Membership of —, 301.
Secret will of God. The — and the revealed things, 64, 65, 321, 233. See Will.
Self-examination. The Lord's Supper, 351, 352. Assurance of faith, 432.
Self defense, 474.
Seventh Commandment, 475.
Science. The "established results" of "science" and creation, 124.
Sin, 156-163. Cannot be left unpunished, 183. Punishment of —, 164-171, 512-515.
Singing in public worship, 303.
Sitting at the right hand of God, 231.
Sixth Commandment, 474.
Sleep of the soul, 494.
Socialism, 476. The Church and social conditions, 305.
Socinians, 87.
Son of man. The name —, 200.
Soothsaying, 469.
Sorcery, 469.
Soul. Origin of the —, 138. — and spirit, 137. Intermediate state of the —, 491-496.
Sovereignty of God. The — and the doctrine of creation, 122. The — and man's responsibility, 363. The —and the supra view, 107. The — no arbitrariness, 77, 107. The first Commandment, 469.
Spiration of the Holy Spirit, 90. The — and mediate regeneration, 386.
Spiritual. — death, 167. — impotence, 173, see Impotence.
Spirituality of God, 79, 80. — of the angels, 118.

State. Definition, 220. — and condition, 220. The — of integrity, 131-136; ruined by sin, 366. Our sinful —and justification, 366, 440, 447. The states of the Mediator, 219-232.
Subjectivism, see Pietism, Objectivity.
Substitute. Christ as — and Predestination, 212.
Suffering of the Mediator, 224.
Suicide, 474.
Sunday. Fourth Commandment. Keeping this day holy; Sunday services; Abstinence of labor; Works of necessity; Substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh, 472.
Superstition, 469.
Supplication as element of prayer, 479.
Supra and infra question, see Infra.

Temporary faith, 402-406.
Temptation. — of Satan in Paradise, 152, 153. Fifth petition, 487.
Ten Commandments. Rules for interpretation of the —, 468. The —, 469-478.
Tenth Commandment, 478.
Testament. Scripture a —, 36, 239. The Covenant of Grace a —, 239.
Testator. In the Covenant of Redemption the Father the — and the Son the Heir, 12, 236. In the Covenant of Grace the Triune God the — and the believers and their seed the heirs, 236, 244.
Testimony. Giving false —, Ninth Commandment, 477.
Thanksgiving as an element of prayer, 479. The — of the Communion Form in regard to "giving" and "being made partakers," 246, 352, 417.
Third Commandment, 471.
Tithing, 476.
Traducianism, 137.
Transubstantiation, 346.
Trichotomy, 136.
Trinity. The —, 81-92. The Triune God first Party of the Covenant of Grace, 236, 244.
Triumphant. The Church —, 259.
Trust as an element of faith, 423.
Twelve Articles, see Apostolic Confession.

Unitarians, 85, 87.
Unity of the Church, 263.
Universal atonement, see atonement.
Utrecht. Conclusions of —, see Conclusions.

Visible Church, see Church.

Westminster Catechism, see Catechism.
Will of God, 62-66. Secret and revealed will, 62, 63. Difficulty involved, 64, 65. Attributes belonging to the —, 66.
Wisdom. The — of God, 61. The — of the divine Decree, 95.
Word of God, see Scripture, Law, Gospel.
World. Relation of the — to God in virtue of creation, 122. Consummation of the —, 490-516. Renewal of the — after Judgment, 516.
Works of God, 93ff. Decree, 94-96. Predestination, 97-110. Covenant of Redemption, 111-113. Creation, 114-124. Providence, 125-130.

7.50
W

DATE DUE

GAYLORD PRINTED IN U.S.A.

230.57
H619

Heyns, William.
AUTHOR

Manual of Reformed doctrine.
TITLE

44111

230.57
H619 Heyns, William.
Manual of Reformed
doctrine.

44111